

Effective strategies to enhance students' reading comprehension

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Abstract: Researchers have found that teaching reading strategies is a key element in developing student comprehension. However, many teachers lack a solid foundation for teaching these reading comprehension strategies. Therefore, teachers need to be prepared on how to design effective comprehension strategies and how to teach these strategies to their students. Therefore, this study aims to study the effective reading strategies in order to improve reading skills in language classes.

Keywords: receptive skills, skimming, scanning, content and functional words, reading comprehension

Reading is one of the basic skills in language learning and teaching. Chastain (1988) stated that second and foreign language students need to read large quantities of authentic materials in order to be able to read for communication. Reading is a crucially important language skill. Its importance is much more felt in today's life than in any time in human history. Clearly, instruction plays an important role in the learner's success; however, the classroom content needs to be there presentation of the real content out of the class to which the students will frequently be exposed to in their real life encounters. Reading comprehension is a complicated process of comprehending a piece of text and then constructing its meaning. To read fluently and with comprehension, students must successfully combine a number of reading sub-skills, pre-requisites for successful reading.

Reading skills are considered receptive skills because learners don't need to produce language, they receive and understand it. In order to have an accurate understanding teachers need to practice and develop students' receptive skills. Otherwise, students can't produce language without understanding the context.

Teachers face some challenges while developing students' listening skills than practicing reading skills. Students might have some problems with understanding the spoken language, such as there can be dialects, different accents, and various temps of voice or the material tends to be informal and colloquial. As well as, the text is gone quickly, so you can't refer back to check it.

Students consider it more convenient to practice reading texts. Texts are mostly produced formally, repeatedly you can work, and highlight the information on the page. Students needn't comprehend different pronunciations and rapid speech. There

are some reading techniques to enhance students' comprehension. They are reading for gist and reading to search for specific details in the text.

Skimming is reading rapidly in order to get a general overview of the material. We sometimes name this type of reading as reading for gist. Skimming includes the general understanding of the text without reading every word. Students can skim the titles, read selected parts of information, or may draw a summary due to the pictures in the text. It is an effective technique to identify the main idea of the text. While skimming the text, it is important to read quickly and clarify the words that carry meaning in a short amount of time. These types of words are called content words as well as, there are function words that meaning is not clear but have a particular function in English grammar.

For example, *Content words*: study, university, diploma, verification.

Function words: does, at, an, the, such.

Scanning is reading to search for specific details in the text. This technique includes finding quickly specific information such as names, numbers, and facts to answer a particular question. Scanning a new text is difficult without skimming the main idea of the text. It will help to save time if you skim the text keeping in mind the necessary information you are searching for. This technique is useful for responding exam type questions such as True/False exercises, completing the gaps or discovering facts.

Moreover, scanning the text involves isolating important details instead of focusing on the whole text. In order to scan the text, the technique can be split into three parts:

In the first part, you will identify keywords, specific language, or information that you are searching for.

In the second part move your eyes quickly through a text for those words you identified previously.

In the last part, you will read specific information with the sentence around them to understand the whole information.

This technique is effective for learners in that it minimizes the time, you needn't read the whole text. Only it requires focusing on specific details. Also, you needn't scan the right order of text parts. You can start at the end or middle part of the text until you find information to any questions. It helps reduce time and to locate the required information faster.

Conversely to scanning, skimming technique involves reading the title and subheadings. Reading titles and subheadings help students predict what the text is about and students can analyze what points will be involved in the text material. Besides, after recognizing the title and subheadings students can discuss the main topic, brainstorm the related ideas to the current topics and they make predictions in

small groups or pairs work. This technique provides student-student interaction in the lesson. Moreover, any pictures in the text are important to signify what type of language they might face as they read.

As well as, the teachers need to acquire the stages of reading lessons to develop reading comprehension skills. It is important how to design each stages of skills-based lessons, what it involves and how it works.

1. Pre-reading stage

At the Pre-reading stage teachers prepare students to introduce the new topic with the help of some vocabulary activities that they will use in the reading or some elicitation questions to hint at the new topic. Teachers present any context or explain the topic then, students can activate background knowledge and try to establish related information to the topic. There are some activities that can be used in the pre-reading stage:

Activating schemata. Schemata means students' background knowledge of a certain topic. The teachers try to associate and think students' base knowledge to a particular topic. For example, if we said "Environment", students should link that schema with ideas such as "landmarks, natural resources, pollution, human factor".

Eliciting. Teachers try present the topic with the help of giving questions and asking ideas involving students' interactions.

Brainstorms. Teachers divide students into small groups and make questionnaires to think of related topics.

Guessing. Teachers can use some visual aids or realia to guess what the topic might be.

2. Whilst reading stage.

This stage is the main part of the lesson. Students read a particular text with clear tasks or questions to focus on the content of what they are reading during the task. Reading a text with tasks is important for students to retain the information much better.

Skimming and scanning activities are effective at the whilst reading stage. After a general understanding of the text, students need to work more detailed comprehension of the text in question.

At this stage teachers can use other activities:

Giving title. This is accomplished by summarizing each section, chapter, or paragraph. This activity helps teachers check students' comprehension of what they have read. Then we can organize some discussions to choose the most appropriate title summaries.

Reading to focus on particular language points. Students can look through the usage of particular language points in the sentence structure. This can help students to produce some active tasks in the post-reading stage.

3. Post reading stage.

Post-reading tasks are done after the main reading task. It helps students strengthen and practice the newly learned words and language points, and can help to sort out confusing information in students' recognition of the topic. Students use newly learned information and vocabulary in various activities. Students can freely practice learned information, ideas, and grammar points in discussions, debates and role plays in order to use the target language in real-life communication.

The next important factor of the lesson is the choosing and presenting reading materials. Teachers can use various types of academic, general and trivial readings according to the needs analyses of students. Moreover, we can use authentic materials such as newspapers to expose learners to real-world reading. It is known that authentic materials are written for native speakers and it can give students to raise self-awareness of understanding of real English. Newspapers can be considered as realia in the lesson and it is interesting working with newspapers in different styles of students.

Findings of this study suggest a number of theoretical and pedagogical implications. The study also has implications for further research. According to the recent theories and approaches in language learning and teaching, learning is enhanced more efficiently and rapidly if the students get familiar with the objectives of the course. The main theoretical contribution of this study is that when students know why they are reading the text or what they are supposed to know and be able to do with the information derived from the text, they will be more successful learners. Reading strategies can be considered as a means to achieve the intended objectives. In terms of pedagogical practice, the findings of the study provide further empirical evidence of the usefulness of explicit teaching of reading strategies. These strategies play the role of tools that contribute to the reading and comprehending texts with the intention of collecting particular types of information out from different types of reading texts. Interested researchers also can consider different strategies and different types of text along with different possible objectives in their studies to suggest the application of the right strategy in the right situation for the fulfillment of the intended objectives in reading different text types. Different readers can have drastically different objectives. By clarifying what you need to know, you will be able to distinguish the important from the irrelevant and focus attention accordingly. For different students, different reading strategies seem to be useful. It is due to the fact that they do not have the same reading styles. One particular strategy may help a student in overcoming the reading difficulties while the same strategy might be of no use to another student. When the strategies are taught explicitly to the students, it gives

them the chance to learn and know those strategies and to be able to reflect on their effectiveness.

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