

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF READING SKILLS IN LEARNING ENGLISH AND THE TEACHER’S ROLE IN DEVELOPING READING COMPREHENSION

Reymova Dilnoza Paraxat qizi
Bachelor of Art in English

Abstract: *This article emphasizes the significance of reading skills in learning English as a foreign language and explores the role of teachers in promoting reading comprehension. It discusses the importance of well-designed teaching procedures for the mastery of reading skills and highlights the benefits of reading skill instruction for students of all levels. The article presents the three main phases in teaching and learning reading: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading, explaining the purpose and activities involved in each phase. Additionally, it discusses the crucial role of teachers in teaching reading skills and provides insights into the roles they assume during intensive and extensive reading practices. The article concludes by presenting principles of teaching reading that can enhance students' fluency and comprehension skills.*

Introduction

The increasing importance of learning English as a global language has led to a greater focus on the mastery of the four language skills, including reading. English is widely used in various domains such as commerce, science, education, and technology, necessitating the development of reading skills for effective communication. This article highlights the significance of reading skills in learning English and the need for well-designed teaching procedures to facilitate the mastery of these skills.

Importance of Reading Skill Instruction:

Reading skill instruction has been found to be highly beneficial for students at all levels. Teachers play a crucial role in explaining and modeling multiple strategies, providing guided and independent practice, and offering feedback to improve students' reading levels. Reports from secondary school teachers and experts indicate that many students struggle with understanding reading texts. Effective teaching of reading skills is vital to address this challenge and enhance students' language skills.

Phases in Teaching and Learning Reading:

Teaching and learning reading can be divided into three main phases: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. The pre-reading phase aims to introduce and arouse interest in the topic, motivate learners, and provide language preparation for the text. It familiarizes students with the text's content and organization, activating their prior knowledge and preparing them for the reading task. The while-reading phase focuses on engaging students with the text, promoting interaction, and integrating their prior knowledge with new information. Students read silently, comprehend the main points, and answer questions designed to enhance their understanding. The post-reading phase allows students to articulate their understanding, think

critically about the text's validity, and relate the passage to their own experiences. It involves activities such as comprehension checks, discussions, and integrating other language skills.

Teachers' Role in Teaching Reading Skill:

The teacher plays a decisive role in students' reading skill development.

Ineffective teaching of reading and inadequate textbooks contribute to students' poor reading abilities. Therefore, teachers should possess critical qualities of knowledge and practice, such as understanding learners' reading and writing development, assessing individual progress, employing various teaching methods, using diverse reading materials, tailoring instruction to individual students, and providing strategic support. Teachers should actively engage students in the process of meaning and knowledge construction by applying effective techniques and strategies in teaching reading.

The Role of Teachers in Intensive Reading:

In intensive reading, where students are expected to understand everything they read, the teacher's role is to create enthusiasm and interest in reading. This can be achieved by selecting topics that arouse students' interest according to their level. The teacher assumes roles as an organizer, observer, feedback organizer, and parameter during intensive reading sessions. These roles involve setting reading purposes, observing students' progress, providing feedback, and clarifying language features.

The Role of Teachers in Extensive Reading:

Teachers have a vital role in encouraging students to engage in extensive reading, especially since most students may not engage in extensive reading on their own. Teachers should aim to cultivate a habit of extensive reading by demonstrating model reading of the text, allowing students to read independently, and providing guidance and support when needed.

Principles of Teaching Reading:

Several principles can guide teachers in effectively teaching reading to English language learners. These principles include:

Reading is not a passive skill: Reading should be an active occupation where students actively engage with the text, understand the meanings of words, interpret pictures, grasp arguments, and form opinions. Passive reading leads to surface-level understanding and a higher likelihood of forgetting.

Students need to be engaged with what they are doing: Teachers should create reading activities that actively engage students, fostering genuine interest and motivation. Active engagement helps students derive maximum benefit from the reading experience.

Learners should respond to the context of a reading text, not just the language:

The main goal of reading is to comprehend the meaning and message of the text.

Teachers should provide opportunities for students to respond to the content, encouraging their interpretation and understanding of the text.

Prediction is a major factor in reading: Prediction plays a significant role in the reading process. Teachers should guide students in using contextual cues, such as book covers, photographs, contents, and titles, to make predictions about the text before reading. This helps activate students' prior knowledge and sets the stage for meaningful reading experiences.

Match the task to the topic: When assigning reading tasks, teachers should ensure they align with the topic and purpose of the text.

Designing appropriate questions and activities that engage students' thinking and interaction with the text is crucial. Inappropriate or irrelevant tasks can hinder student engagement and make the reading experience less enjoyable.

Qualified teachers exploit reading texts to the full: Teachers should make the most of reading texts by integrating them into interesting class sequences. They can use the text as a basis for class discussions, further tasks, language study, and subsequent language activation. This approach ensures that students fully benefit from the reading material and engage with it in various ways.

Conclusion

Teaching reading skills is essential for English language learners to enhance their fluency and comprehension abilities. Teachers play a vital role in facilitating the development of these skills by employing effective teaching procedures, employing appropriate strategies, and providing guidance and support. The three main phases of teaching and learning reading pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading provide a structured framework for effective reading instruction. By understanding the roles and responsibilities of teachers in both intensive and extensive reading, educators can create engaging and meaningful reading experiences for their students. Adhering to principles of teaching reading can further enhance the effectiveness of instruction and promote students' overall reading proficiency.

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