THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF READING SKILLS IN EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This article discusses the main principles of reading and improving reading skills in EFL classroom. Due to the focus of classroom that is devoted to language learning as foreign languages there can existed more techniques and activities than ordinary or philological classes or institution. The paper investigates some exact classification of class process reading activities and games that lead to enhancement of reading comprehension.

Keywords: skimming, scanning, modeling, intensive reading, specific information.

Introduction. For students to develop communicative competence in reading, classroom and homework reading activities must resemble real-life reading tasks that involve meaningful communication.

The reading material must be authentic. It must be the kind of material that students will need and want to be able to read when travelling, studying abroad, or using the language in other contexts outside the classroom.

Rather than simplifying a text by changing its language , make it more approachable by eliciting student's existing knowledge in pre-reading discussion, reviewing new vocabulary before reading and asking students to perform tasks that are within their competence, such as skimming to get the main idea or scanning for specific information , before they begin intensive reading.

2. The reading purpose must be authentic. Students must be reading for reasons that make sense and relevance to them.

3. The reading approach must also be authentic. Students should read the text in such a way that matches the reading purpose, the type of text, and the way people normally read.

Methodology. Traditional teaching practices and classroom do not promote many opportunities for the students to participate in the classroom or speak in the classroom rather they are like one-way traffic. The teacher plays an active role and teaches deductively throughout the course. However, the demand for today's competitive world is to become active and expressive students at every forum. Students still do not feel comfortable when they are asked to deliver a speech or speak in front of the audience. This is because they are not trained enough to read and speak in the classroom. Additionally, teachers across the world in ESL/EFL classrooms do not use strategies or techniques to teach reading skills or develop the schema of the students. Reading skills especially in EFL settings have different goals or we can say that a reader read a text with different intentions. Understanding a written text means getting the required meaning of that particular text as efficiently as possible. To retrieve the required meaning from the text one needs to apply different reading strategies according to their needs and wants. For example, looking a newspaper for some specific information and looking a notice for required information or particular kind of information. Locating the relevant advertisement in the newspaper contains in the article demonstrate that the purpose of reading in each situation has been successfully fulfilled. In the first case where the reader is looking for specific information applies the scanning strategies and in the second

case the reader applies the skimming strategies to infer the gist of the text where more detailed co comprehension of the text is needed.

Strategies for developing reading skills

Strategies that can help students read more quickly and effectively include

➢ Previewing: reviewing titles, section headings, and photo captions to get a sense of the structure and content of a reading selection

➢ Predicting: using knowledge of the subject matter to make predictions about content and vocabulary and check comprehension; using knowledge of the text type and purpose to make predictions about discourse structure; using knowledge about the author to make predictions about writing, vocabulary and content.

➢ Skimming and scanning: using a quick survey of text to get the main idea, identifying text structure, conform or question predictions

➢ Guessing from context: using prior knowledge of the subject and the ideas in the text as clues to the meanings of unknown words, instead of stopping to look them up.

➢ Paraphrasing: stopping at the end of a section to check comprehension by restating the information and ideas in the text.

Instructors can help students learn when and how to use reading strategies in several ways.

➢ By modeling the strategies aloud, talking through the processes of reviewing, predicting, skimming and scanning, and paraphrasing. This shows students how the strategies work and how much they can know about a text before they begin to read word by word.

➢ By allowing time in class for group and individual previewing and predicting activities as preparation for in- class or out of class reading.

➢ By using cloze (fill in the blanks) exercises to review vocabulary items. This help students learn to guess meaning from context.

➢ By encouraging students to talk about what strategies they think will help them approach a reading assignment, and then talking after reading about what strategies they actually used.

Strategies are often applied by the teachers and used by the learners to obtain the intended meaning of the text which they read. Now the question here is what kind of text learners generally read and what are the necessary skills required for them to infer the meaning. For example, what kind of text students read like newspapers, novels, short stories, other literary text and passages, essays, poems, articles, reports, summaries, textbooks and so forth. Now the next level of comprehension is why students read? The answer is generally students read to obtain the information from the text. The second is to seek pleasure from the text.The main ways of reading are as follows:

Skimming. The process of skimming comprises of quickly running through the text and get the gist of it and get a general idea of the text to understand what it is all about.

Scanning. Scanning as a strategy of reading is more specific as compared to the process of skimming because through this one can quickly going through a text to find a particular piece of information. It is used to get specific information from the text. Extensive Reading The extensive reading is mainly used to read longer texts, usually for one's own pleasure. This is a fluency activity, mainly involving the overall understanding of a text.

Intensive Reading. Intensive reading is used to read shorter texts, to extract specific information. This is more an accuracy activity involving reading for details of the text. These different ways of reading are not mutually exclusive. For instance, one often skims through a passage to see what it is about before deciding whether it is worth scanning a particular paragraph for the information one is looking for. In real life, our reading purposes constantly vary and therefore, when devising exercises, we should vary

the questions and the activities according to the type of text studied and the purpose in reading it. The idea of teaching reading skills varies according to the situation and level of students. Here one size fit for all cannot be applicable in the real classroom because the nature of the students is heterogeneous.

As mentioned earlier, a Hudson defines skills as automatized strategies (Hudson, 2007, pp. 77-79, 106). Thus there are a number of skills that will improve reading capacity. Hudson groups these into four categories, namely word-attack skills, comprehension skills, fluency skills and critical reading skills (Hudson, 2007, p. 79). Each of these skills encompasses numerous subskills. Word-attack skills By word-attack skills or decoding skills is meant the skills that are needed to transfer the orthographic symbols into language (Hudson, 2007, p. 79). Subskills in this category will first and foremost have to do with the ability to recognize different aspects of the text like syllables, word boundaries, upper and lower case letters etc (Hudson, 2007, p. 79). Comprehension skills Comprehension skills are skills where the reader uses his background knowledge and context to understand what is read (Hudson, 2007, p. 79). Subskills in this category can be 18 grammatical competence, knowledge of how the language is built up, apply metacognitive knowledge etc (Hudson, 2007, pp. 79-80). Fluency skills Fluency skills mean the ability to read larger sequences of a text without being "interrupted" (Hudson, 2007, p. 80). These "interruptions" often occur because a reader has to spell difficult words or because he does not understand certain words or parts of text and reads it over again. These interruptions lead to slow and fragmented reading. A fluent reader's subskills are the abilities to recognize words and letter clusters fast. The fluent reader will also read fast and has a large vocabulary (Hudson, 2007, p. 80). Critical reading skills By critical reading skills is meant the ability to "analyze, synthesize and evaluate what is read" (Hudson, 2007, p. 80). Subskills in this category can be recognizing arguments, the ability to discuss pro's and con's, seeing the cause-and-effect etc (Hudson, 2007, p. 80).

Traditionally, there have been two views on reading in a foreign language. According to Hudson, Jolly and Coady claim that reading ability in a second language mostly depends on the reading ability in the first language, while Yorio and Clarke claim that knowledge of the second language's syntax and vocabulary is the single most important factor in second language reading ability (as cited by Hudson, 2007, p. 60). An interesting question in addressing second language reading is whether or not reading is exactly the same in different languages. If a pupil reads poorly in his second language, is it then a reading problem or a language problem? Hudson deals with the question by pointing to Alderson who says that it is "necessary to address this because it is central to sorting out the causes and origins of second and foreign language reading problems" (Hudson, 2007, p. 61). Alderson has noted that some teachers think that their students are poor second language readers because they are poor first language readers, while others point to the fact that they do not know the second language well enough (Hudson, 2007, p. 60).

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