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Teaching Reading – A Challenge in Itself

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Abstract

An interactive process which is carried on between the reader and the text that results in comprehension is reading. However, this comprehension depends on perception and thought. The reader also employs some skills for the better comprehension of the text. Moreover, there are diverse facets of reading that are vital in the preparation of teaching and its materials and which need to be taken care of.

The present paper focuses on certain tenets of reading, which have proved useful in this context. However, these are macro. The techniques offered here are possible to be pertinent throughout the world. Certainly, they might be especially productive in the nations that are presently less developed in the economic terms. Nevertheless, the tenets should be appraised in connection with regional conditions, and customized consequently. Propositions or guiding principles in any didactic setting or ethnic framework entail perceptive and rational use, and ongoing assessment for being put into practice.

Key Words: Interactive, perception, tenets, reading, techniques

Introduction

Reading is vis-à-vis comprehending written texts. It is a convoluted pursuit that entails perception as well as thought. Reading comprises the dual process: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition signifies the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. Comprehension is the process of crafting sense of words, sentences and connected text. Learning to read is a crucial educational goal since the ability to read unbolts novel worlds and opportunities. It facilitates us to acquire new knowledge, benefit from literature, and do everyday things that are an essential part of modern life, such as, reading the newspapers, classifieds, magazines, books, and so on.

Purpose of Reading

Reading is an activity with a purpose. One may read so as to acquire information or authenticate existing knowledge, or in order to assess critically a writer's ideas or writing style. One may also read for gratification, or to augment the understanding of the language being read. The purpose(s) for reading steer the reader's choice of texts.

The purpose for reading also ascertains the right approach to reading comprehension. One who is reading poetry for pleasure needs to identify the words the poet uses and the ways they are woven together, but does not need to recognize the core idea and sustaining details. Nevertheless, a person using a scientific article to buttress estimation needs to know the vocabulary that is used, comprehend the facts and cause-effect sequences that are portrayed, and spot ideas that are presented as the premise.

Reading Research

Reading research illustrates that the outstanding readers

- Indulge in extensive reading
- Assimilate information in the text with existing understanding
- Possess a flexible reading style, depending on the content
- Read for a purpose

The purpose(s) for reading and the sort of text ascertain the specific knowledge, skills, and strategies that readers need to put into operation to attain comprehension.

Role of the Teachers

To realize this purpose, the teachers need to focus on the process of reading prior to its outcome.

- They should develop students' perception of the reading process and reading strategies by asking them to contemplate and talk about how they read in their native language.
- They should permit students to practice all the reading strategies by using genuine reading tasks. They should motivate students to peruse to learn and also to have an authentic objective for reading by providing students some choice of reading material.
- While handling the reading tasks in class, they should show students the strategies that will work best for the reading purpose and the kind of text. They should clarify how and why students should use the strategies.
- They should have students rehearse reading strategies in class and ask them to practice outside the class in their reading assignments.
- They should hearten students to assess their comprehension and self testify their use of strategies.
- They should promote the development of reading skills and the use of reading strategies by using the target language to communicate instructions and course-related information in written form: office hours, homework tasks, and assessment material.

Focus on Students' Perception

By elevating students' perception of reading as a skill that entails active engagement, and by overtly teaching reading strategies, teachers can facilitate their students build on both the aptitude and the assurance to handle communication situations they may come across outside the classroom. Thus they can give their students the base for communicative knack in the new language.

Reading as a Process

Reading is an interactive process that carries on between the reader and the text, ensuing in comprehension. The text offers letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs that encode meaning. The reader uses knowledge, skills, and strategies to decode the same. These include the following:

- **Linguistic skill:** the faculty to identify the constituents of the writing system; know-how of vocabulary; awareness of how words are structured into sentences.
- **Discourse skill:** acquaintance with discourse markers and how they link parts of the text to each other.
- **Sociolinguistic skill:** knowledge about different types of texts and their standard structure and content
- **Strategic skill:** the knack to use top-down and bottom-up strategies.

Teaching Reading

Teaching Reading demands the knowledge of various kinds of learners and their requirements. Research has proved that there is a substantial transfer from learning to read in one language to learning to read in a second language. The tenets detailed below are based on studies of children and adults, native speakers as also those learning to read in a second or foreign language. They take care of diverse facets of reading that are vital in the preparation of teaching and its materials.

The functional appliances are based on general learning principles, as well as on research. The type of learner and the context will influence the type of methods and materials to be employed. Research and classroom practices sustain the use of an unprejudiced approach in teaching.

As reading depends on efficient word recognition and comprehension, teaching should develop reading skills and strategies, along with developing learners' knowledge through employing authentic texts.

→ Oral Lingo

Initial progress in reading largely rests on oral language growth. Usually developing children attain speech and language abilities in a natural manner, without effort.

However, learning to read is a different process since it entails learning about a symbolic system (writing) used to represent speech. Prior to learning to associate the written form with speech, children need to learn the vocabulary, grammar and sound system of the oral language.

Steps to be taken by Teachers
• supply occasions for children to build up their oral language through story-telling and show-and-tell activities.
• motivate young children to use oral language to express themselves while learning about books both at home and in school.
• following the effectual strategy of shared book reading to groups of students using big books as that introduces books and reading to children, and also encouraging them to talk about what is being read.
• facilitating class dictated stories which make use of children's oral language in structured reading and writing activities. Initially, the children tell a story in their own words. The teacher writes this down on the blackboard for the children, and then reads it back to them. Students take turns practicing reading the story as well.

→ **Fluency**

Fluency is significant since it is closely linked to comprehension. Fluency in reading means the ability to read text precisely, quickly and with expression. This is possible by the fluent readers because they do not have troubles with word recognition. Consequently, they can concentrate on the import of a text. Recent research demonstrates that fluency also depends on the ability to categorize words suitably during reading. This implies that fluent readers not only recognize words rapidly, but also know where to place stress or pause during reading.

Steps to be taken by Teachers

• teach word recognition skills at first and then ensure that students develop speed and ease in recognizing words and reading associated text.
• listen to the students reading aloud to evaluate fluency, provide feedback to the students about their reading and ascertain how much is comprehended.
• make sure that the word recognition ability for non-native speakers of a language complements their oral language development.
• Repeat reading and paired reading.

→ **Intent and Motivation**

A reader reads a text to comprehend its meaning, and also to use that comprehension. A text is read to discover, to obtain information, to be amused, to ponder or as a religious practice. The intent for reading is closely allied to a person's motivation for reading. It will also have an effect on the way a book is read. We read a novel in a different way

from the way we read a dictionary. In the classroom, teachers need to be aware of their students' learning needs, their motivation for reading and the aim that reading has in their lives.

Steps to be taken by Teachers

• interact with students about the various purposes for reading to make them aware of what to concentrate on while reading.
• employ assorted texts (information text, stories, news items, and literature) to encourage different purposes and forms of reading.
• use genuine texts and tasks to further focussed reading.
• utilize books and reading materials that are appealing and pertinent to students in order to motivate them to read more.

→ Appropriate Texts

Choosing texts of the right difficulty and interest levels will inspire children not only to read but also to enjoy what they are reading. Vocabulary, word and sentence length, and grammatical intricacy are traditional indicators of the complexity of a text. The theme of a book is also a critical factor. Cultural factors are crucial when selecting books for non-native speakers. Students enjoy reading information texts when they can make use of their knowledge of the topic.

Steps to be taken by Teachers

• choose books that employ good style and language.
• choose reading materials that utilize students' regional context.
• use information texts that include well-known topics, which will aloe them to use their prior knowledge and to understand more about the topic.
• introduce reading materials of different genres to provide wider learning experience.

→ Appraisal

Reading appraisal has two forms – Diagnosis and Evaluation. Diagnosis is to find out how well students are reading so as to help them advance. Diagnostic appraisal is about giving feedback and support to learners. Evaluation is to gauge how much progress has been made. Both forms of appraisal are required for effective reading training. In the initial phase of reading, appraisal is usually done by listening to students reading aloud.

Teachers appraise word recognition and fluency in this manner. Further appraisal should focus principally on text comprehension, which is usually appraised through questions. Higher order questions should be used which focus on core ideas and perspectives, not trivial particulars. Techniques of appraisal vary with the kinds of answers students give to

the questions. Materials used for appraising reading must preferably be bona fide. They should reflect the type of reading that usually comes across in life every day.

Steps to be taken by Teachers

• use appraisal to find out how well students are reading, and also to understand how to facilitate them read better.
• choose a method of assessment appropriate for the level and type of student.
• select higher order questions that take the form of 'how' and 'why', rather than 'what'.
• be watchful of words and concepts that might be unknown when picking materials for appraising non-native speakers.

→ **Cultural factors**

Reading comprehension is about linking prior knowledge to recent knowledge included in written texts. It is a known fact that prior knowledge depends on experience gained.

Topics that are well-known and candidly talked about in one culture may be obnoxious in another. Children growing up in rural backgrounds will have different experiences from those growing in the urban society.

Steps to be taken by Teachers

• select reading materials that are culturally fitting.
• choose reading materials that make use of students' lives, experiences and pursuits.
• take time to discuss and elucidate unknown notions and words to sensitize students towards cultural factors.
• present cultural information in the students' native language. This serves as background knowledge before the students try to read in the foreign language.

→ **Practice**

One knows that good readers read with ease, accuracy and understanding. They also do more reading and thus increase their vocabulary and knowledge, which further augments their gains in reading and learning. As soon as students are able to recognize written words in their language easily, they need to acquire fluency in reading. Fluency develops with oral language development and print exposure as well. The more they read, the more vocabulary and knowledge they attain, and the more voluble they become in reading.

Steps to be taken by Teachers

• use sustained silent reading programmes to promote reading practice.
• encourage students to read unaided and widely.
• encourage students to read different types of texts.

• teach students how to choose books of the appropriate reading level.
• develop students' interest in reading by connecting reading with their interests, hobbies and life goals.

Conclusion

There are numerous things that can be considered in teaching reading. What has been presented here is a set of facets that are believed to be quite crucial. Nevertheless, each of these must be customized for a specific context, for a specific language, and for students of conflicting abilities. It is equally critical to remember that the goal of reading is to understand the texts and to be able to learn from them. Reading is a skill that will empower everyone who learns it. It enables one to benefit from the treasury of knowledge and ultimately contribute to it in some way or the other.

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