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Approaches to Develop Reading Skills

Abstract

The skill to read in a language is one of the most important skills required for everyone. This skill, is considered to be a skill which is the most difficult one to develop to a high level of expertise. It is worth noting that the central purpose of reading is to comprehend the text. It is sometimes said that if meaning is to be developed from the text, reading must be primarily a reasoning activity. Reading is a receptive skill. It is generally believed that the more one reads, the more he can better in writing.

Keywords: Reading, Methods, Classification, Understanding, Comprehension.

Introduction

Reading can be defined as the ability to make proper sense of written or printed symbols so as to get the information from the memory which we use to construct a credible interpretation of the writer's message. Reading consists of four activities. They are word perception, comprehension, reaction to what is read, assimilation of what is read through the fusion of the old and new ideas.

Psychologists consider that reading is a guessing game and a sort of thinking activity. Reading activity includes perception, recognition, association, understanding, organization, and finding meaning. So, the process of reading is complex in nature and related to mental ability of the reader. Hence, reading is considered as psycholinguistic process. According to Goodman (1970), the process of reading is the reconstruction of meaning. Reading can be defined simply as the ability to understand the written text. Comprehension refers to understanding in any of its form, but in the vernacular, it has come to be synonymous with listening comprehension. When people use the term "language comprehension", they are typically not referring to sign language, written language, or symbols typically; the term is reserved for describing spoken language.

Science of Reading

Reading is fairly a new science. The first study of how people learn to read was done by Javal in 1879. In the science of reading, the eye movements were given importance. While we read and it was discovered that eyes move in discrete jumps across the line of print. The eyes move and stop then move and stop. It is believed that the eyes move and stop many a time across a line of print. Each stop will be called as fixation. There is duration of fixation. The eyes must remain stationary in order to record words. Then, they jump to the next point

and there is another duration of fixation and so on. This is the way the process of reading takes place.

The Skill of Reading

Like other skills of language, reading is also a complex skill involving the usage of a number of simultaneous operations. Following are some of the skills listed by John Munby (1968)

1. Recognizing the script of a language
2. Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical item
3. Understanding explicitly stated information
4. Understanding information not explicitly stated
5. Understanding conceptual meaning
6. Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances
7. Understanding the relations between the parts of the text through lexical cohesion devices.
8. Understanding cohesion between cohesion devices
9. Interpreting indicators in discourse
10. Recognizing indicators in discourse
11. Distinguishing the main idea from supporting details.
12. Identifying the main point or important information in a piece of discourse
13. Extracting salient point for summarizing
14. Selective extraction of relevant points from a text.
15. Basic reference skill
16. Skimming
17. Scanning to locate specifically required information and

18. Transcoding information to diagrammatic display.

Types of Reading

Reading can be classified as oral and silent reading, informational and recreational reading, and observational, assimilative, reflective and creative reading. Yoakem (1955) has classified reading according to the form, purpose, and the psychological process involved. On the basis of 'form' reading is categorized as silent and oral reading. The reader either reads to himself or to others. On the basis of the factor purpose, reading may be classified as delectatory or leisure reading and informational or educational or professional reading. Reading can also be classified from the point of view of mental or psychological process into four types. The first one is observational reading, where the reader makes note of what the writer intends to work but makes no special efforts to analyze it or to remember the words or ideas. Another kind of reading involves the assimilation of what one reads. Here the reader tries to understand fully and remember what he reads. The third type of reading is reflective reading, where the reader reads with a critical attitude. The last one is called creative reading. Here the reader tries to discover ideas so that he can use them subsequently in oral or written expression.

Classification of Reading

The same reading is also classified into

1. Skimming which involves quickly running one's eye over a text to get the gist of it.
2. Scanning which involves quickly going through a text to find a particular piece of information and
3. Extensive reading i.e., reading a longer text usually for one's own pleasure.

Skimming

It involves quickly running one's mind over at text to get the risk of it.

Scanning

In order to find a particular piece of information, we quickly go through the text. That is called scanning.

Extensive Reading

It is reading longer text usually for one's own pleasure. This is a fluent activity mainly involving global understanding. It cultivates taste for reading. Good rapid silent reading is sometimes called extensive reading.

Intensive Reading

This would involve reading shorter texts to extract specific information. This kind of reading is otherwise known as reading for details. Through this, there is scope for learning language. This reading concentrates upon the language while extensive reading concentrates upon subject matter.

Chorus Reading

If the class room is bigger, this reading method will be useful. Poetry will suit this reading.

Silent Reading

It helps to overcome the problem of extreme types. It also helps the students to find out the ideas of a given passage, and determine the sequence of these ideas and to trace

through them the development of the main idea. The people can get pleasure from this type of reading.

Reading Aloud

The beginners should learn to recognize and pronounce the written foreign words. It is believed that oral reading aids comprehension. Intonation and stress can be acquired through this reading. This reading can enable the reader to evade from external distraction.

The following abilities should be developed through this reading.

1. Pronouncing words
2. Recognizing words
3. Reading rapidly, easily and fluently to get the thought accurately.
4. Interpreting sentences and paragraphs and
5. Understanding the direct and indirect meaning. etc.

Supplementary Reading

This has something to do with the resemblance to extensive reading. Supplementary reader should be aware in a standard language. At the same time, it should be written in a simple language.

Reading can easily be defined as the ability to understanding of the written text. Reading and writing have been assumed to be very different processes. When people read, they decode or decipher the message that author has written, and when they write, they produce their own ideas for others to read. It is believed that reading and writing are the flip sides of the literacy coin. Reading and writing are said to be in the processes of constructing meaning. Reading and writing are now viewed as transactive process in which readers and writers are said to be the process of constructing meaning. Reading and writing are now

viewed as transitive process in which readers and writers create meaning. Readers use their life and literature experiences and knowledge of written language as they read, and writers bring similar knowledge and experiences to writing. It is quite common for two people to read the same story and hold with different interpretation.

Many second-language teachers believe that poor second language reading is due to a lack of good reading abilities / skills / habits in the first language. Reading is colourful and interesting. It gives pleasure to one and all. Bacon says that Reading make the man perfect. It could be said that reading could be a source of information.

In second and foreign language reading studies, there was an earlier emphasis on the importance of syntactic as well as lexical knowledge, and only recently the rhetorical knowledge and metalinguistic knowledge have been studied in depth.

Mechanics of Reading

Effective reading of the written material is based on the ability of the reader in using the reading mechanics. A reader who employs this mechanics effectively will have the good chance of having good reading ability mechanics. Two types of mechanics in reading activity are

1. Elementary mechanics
2. Advanced level mechanics

The former incorporates the following ingredients;

1. Identification of the letters or symbols with the sounds
2. Establishing spelling / sound correspondence
3. At times the sound is determined by the spelling

But the latter, the words and their meanings are important in reading. The knowledge of the words and their semantic functions and identification of them come under this mechanics.

Views on Importance of Reading

M.M. Lewis says that reading is the day of the spoken word. The coming of speech machines – telephone, gramophone, radio, and talkie has meant an increase in the power and function of speech throughout the world. Palmer says reader shall refrain from reading or writing any material until we have learnt to use the spoken form. William Grabe says that the ability to read in a second language (L2) is one of the most important skills of people in multilingual and international settings. Any current understanding of reading requires attention to a number of basic issues.

1. Different purposes for reading
2. Deviational criteria for fluent reading
3. Processes that underlie reading as an individual skill
4. Social context influences on L2 reading.
5. Unique features of L2 reading and difficulties central for L2 reading instruction.

Teaching Reading

Reading is taught by adopting different methods in school curriculums which are categorized (Yadov, 2002) as follows:

Alphabetic Method (Spelling Method)

Here, in this method, it is believed that learner should be familiar with the forms and names of letters. The familiarity would help the students to recognize and pronounce different words. Repetition leads to good command over the spelling after continuous practice, reading starts. Even the stress is given on recognizing new words. The sounds of the names of letter do not always indicate the pronunciation of words.

Phonic Method

Some assume that the sounds of the letters, not their names, when uttered rapidly produce the words. It is suggested that in the initial stage sounds had better be learnt because they can be easily combined into syllable and words, phrases and sentences. In this method, pupil is busy in sounding the letters and loses the sense or meaning of the words. At this stage, Homophonous forms might confuse.

(e.g.) Cent, Sent.

Syllabic Method

Teaching syllabus paves the way for formation of words and sentences. Use of syllable is considered better than that of letters. Many consonants can be pronounced accurately only when they are combined with vowels. This method pays its attention to the elements of words and not to the whole words.

Word Method

It is just a modified form of the sentence method. It is considered as the best method of teaching and reading. The child is presented with such words, which he has already learnt through oral exercises. This method hardly develops the necessary accuracy and

independence in word recognition. This method involves the bad habit of reading one word. Single or separate words receive full meanings.

The Phrase Method

It places more emphasis on meaning and develops efficiency in reading. The learner should pronounce clearly and slowly. This method is uneconomical in respect of developing mastery of words. It does not express complete thought or idea.

Sentence Method

Here, an individual could express whole thought which is considered as the units in thinking. The sentences whether short or long acquired or learned from the daily experience of the child come under the purview of his experience. If this method is applied well, it lays foundation for all the attitudes and skills required for good reading a thoughtful reading attitude, a clear grasp of meaning, accuracy and independence in word recognition, intelligence.

The Story Method

This method brings interest among the learners. The instructor/teacher can show a picture to the learner. The student should repeat the stories narrated by the teacher. The students are able to know the sequence of events. Reading becomes incomplete and inaccurate in this method, because undue emphasis is given on memorization of the events of the story. However, it is understood each method has got some merits. So the teaching of reading should adopt the eclectic method.

Metacognitive Skills

Good readers are more effective in using cognitive skills than less fluent readers, and older readers are better than younger readers. Among such Meta cognitive skills are:

- Recognizing the more important information in text
- Adjusting reading rate
- Skimming
- Previewing
- Using context to resolve a misunderstanding
- Formulating questions about information
- Monitoring cognition, including recognizing problems with information presented in text or an ability to understand text.

Improving Comprehension

Reading comprehension requires motivation, mental frame works for holding ideas, concentration and good study techniques.

We know that slow and or/inaccurate word reading performance can greatly inhibit reading comprehension performance because of the human cognitive system called working memory. When we engage in either reading or listening comprehension we have to get a meaningful unit of speech or text into working memory in order to interpret it. The problem with slow and inaccurate word reading is that working memory can only hold information for about 10seconds and then it decays.

Conclusion

Reading comprehension strategies are tools that students can use to help determine the meaning of what they read. We should help the learner in order to master specific reading

skills such as finding main idea, factual recall, vocabulary, sequence, inference and drawing conclusions and we must help learner to improve their reading comprehension and develop an ability to make inferences.

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