

- English as a Second or Foreign Language.** (3rd ed.) (pp.285-299).
- Doff, A.(1992). *Teach English:A training course for teachers.* Scotland: Scotprint Ltd.
- Dubin, F.& Bycina, D.(1991). *Academic reading and ESL/EFL teacher.* In M.Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language.* (2nd ed.) (pp.195-215). Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Fog Index.* (2004). Retrieved From the Web: www.mosaic.org/fog.
- Hawkins, B. (1991). Teaching children to read in a second language. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language.* (2nd ed.) (pp.169-184). Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Jeong, Won Lee. & Schallert, L. (1997). The Relative contribution of L2 language proficiency and L1 reading ability to L2 reading performance: A test of the threshold hypothesis in an EFL context. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31(4), 713-739.
- Lewis, M.& Hill, J. (1990). *Practical techniques for language teaching.* London: Commercial Colour Press.
- Mirhassani, A.& Khosravi, A.(2002). Issues on reading comprehension: Part one. *Roshd Foreign Language Teaching Journal*, 16(65), 12-24.
- Mirhassani, A.& Khosravi, A.(2003). Issues on reading comprehension: Part two *Roshd Foreign Language Teaching Journal*, 17(66), 32-36.
- Mirhassani, A. & Khosravi, A. (2003). Issues on reading comprehension. *Roshd Foreign Language Teaching Journal*, 17(67), 25-32.
- Nuttall, C.(1998). *Teaching reading skills as a foreign language.* Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann.
- Paulston, C. Barret, & Bruder, M.N. (1979). *Teaching English as a second language:* Techniques and procedures. Massachusetts: Winthrop.
- Rivers, W.M.(1981). *Teaching foreign Language skills*(2nded.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Roller, C.M.& Matambo, A.R.(1992). Bilingual reader's use of background knowledge in learning from text. *TESOL Quarterly*, 26 (1), 129-141.
- Seal, B.D.(1991). *Vocabulary learning and teaching.* In M. Celce-Murcia. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language.* (2nd ed.) (pp.296-311). Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Taglieber, L., Johnson, L.& Yarbrough, D. (1988). Effects of prereading activities on EFL reading by Brazilian college students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 22(3), 455-472.
- The Fog Index and readability formulas.* Retrieved From the Web:www.klariti.com/business-writing/Fog-Index-Readability-Formulas.shtml.
- Ur, P. (1996). *A Course in language teaching: Practice and theory.* Britain: Cambridge University Press.
- Wallace, C. (2002). **Reading.** In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Ed.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp 21-27). UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Willis, J.(1991). *Teaching English through English.* Singapore: Longman Singapore.
- Young Oh, Sun. (2001). Two types of input modification and ESL reading comprehension: simplification versus elaboration. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35 (1), 69-96.

The Last Words

As the last point of this article, it should be said that a distinction is usually made between two types of reading: intensive and extensive.

Intensive reading is the careful and detailed reading of the text, which is usually done in the classroom and under the supervision of the teacher. In this type of reading, students are expected to understand everything they read and to be able to answer detailed vocabulary and comprehension questions. The points discussed in this article are mostly intensive reading matters.

Extensive reading, on the other hand, is reading the text to get a general understanding. This type of reading is usually done outside the classroom and the purpose is to get pleasure and enjoy reading. Reading teachers should be aware of the benefits of extensive reading and besides working intensively on the text in the classroom, should encourage students to read freely other interesting texts outside the class. Day and Bamford (2000) emphasizing the importance of extensive reading maintain that weak and uninterested readers can be reached and discover the joy of being able to read in English if extensive reading is incorporated into EFL curriculums. They maintain that researches and studies done in this respect show that extensive reading results in students' making significant gains in other aspects foreign language competence such as listening, writing and vocabulary. This may be due to the fact that extensive reading provide increased exposure to English. Moreover, successful extensive reading and experiencing the joy of reading for pleasure can also lead to positive attitudes toward reading and foreign

language learning in general.

However, reading teachers should take care that in extensive reading, reading is its own reward, therefore, material for this type of reading should be at a lower level of difficulty than that for intensive reading and few or no follow-up activities should be done after reading.

References

- Bowen, J. D., Madson, H. & Hilferty, A. (1985). *TESOL: Techniques and procedures*. New York: Newbury House.
- Broughton, G. et al. (1994). *Teaching English as a foreign language* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Carrel, P. L. (1987). Content and formal schemata in ESL reading. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21(3), 461-481.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (Ed.), (1991). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. (2nd ed.). Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Chastain, K. (1988). *Developing second language skills: Theory to practice*. (3rd ed.). USA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Chen, Hsiu-Chieh & Graves, M. (1995). Effects of previewing and providing background knowledge on Taiwanese College students' comprehension of American short stories. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29 (4), 663-684.
- Day, R. & Bamford, J. (2000). Reaching reluctant readers. *Forum*, 38 (3), 12.
- Decarrico, S.D. (2001). *Vocabulary learning and teaching*. In M.Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching*

item or vocabulary and consolidate what has been read by relating new information to the learner's knowledge, interests and opinions (Dubin & Bycina, 1991; Nuttall, 1998). Teacher's innovations are a good source for devising many new and interesting activities for this stage, but the following are some of the commonly used activities:

Reading Comprehension questions:

Answering reading comprehension questions after reading the text is the commonest post reading activity. There are three kinds of these questions. In the first kind, the answer can be read directly from the text. The answer to the second kind of comprehension questions can be inferred from the text. The last kind of comprehension questions is external questions where it is necessary to understand something outside the text (Lewis, 1990). It should be noted that answering the first kind of comprehension questions which simply echoes the vocabulary and grammar of the text does not require understanding on the part of learners and answering them successfully may not provide proof of successful comprehension. On the other hand, the second and third kinds of reading comprehension questions invite some measures of interpretation and application of the readers background and will demand a real comprehension (Ur, 1996).

Matching sentence halves

In this activity, some sentences from the text are split into halves written in two columns and students match them (Willis, 1991).

Jumbled key points

The teacher writes a list of main ideas in the passage and copies them in wrong order.

Students must number ideas in order they are expressed in the passage. Care must be taken to disguise the wording of the main ideas so that students can not recognize a similar sentence in the text and perhaps get the right order without understanding the text (Willis, 1991).

Gapped texts

In this activity, in the last paragraph of the text some gaps are left. Students should understand the text to be able to fill the gaps in.

Innovating an ending

If the text is a story, students can be asked to write a new ending to the story. This can be done in pairs or groups.

Time-line

Texts that incorporate passage of time lend themselves well to this activity. Here, the teacher provides a table of time and students fill in the blanks with the importance of the time mentioned or the actions happened in that period.

Hot seat

After biographies, one student is asked to sit on the hot seat and others ask him questions about his life.

Monster cloze

The teacher writes the title on the board and students say what ever they can remember from the text. The teacher writes them in order they appear in the text. Then, students using their knowledge of the text and language complete the text.

Discussions

If the text is an argumentative one, after reading, students can express their own ideas and reasons for or against the content.

through the assigned reading and indicates what information is important, how a paragraph or section is organized and what is to be learned. Of course, providing guide-o-ramas demands more work on the part of the teachers.

As you read pages 64 and 65 of your text, follow the instructions listed below:

- Para#1 This paragraph provides a transition from the previous section and a definition of culture. What is that definition/What is meant by "ways"? Give more examples.
- Para#2 This paragraph lists the main parts of the text. Convert the four subtopics into questions.
- Para#3 Paragraphs 3 and 4 deal with the first subtopic: cultural change. In addition to language (given) what other cultural traits have changed?
- Para#4 Why do culture change? (three reasons)
- Para#5-#7 These paragraphs deal with second topic: simple and complex cultures. What are the aims of simple and complex cultures? How are they different in terms of food procurement and tool use? Do you know any other simple cultures that still exist today?
- Para#8-#13 These paragraphs deal with the third point: cultures are learned. Summarize the main points of paragraphs 8,9 and 13. How many inventions can you find mentioned in paragraphs 10-12?

A guide-o-rama (Dubin & Bycina, 1991, p.204)

Modelled reading

Modelled reading is reading the text aloud using appropriate stress and intonation and trying to bring the text to life and showing students that print has meaning. Some people believe that modelled reading should be done as the first activity in while-reading stage, but the present writer personally thinks that, if the text is read to learners before they are familiar with the gist of the passage through skimming and scanning activities, they will hardly listen to and follow the text. Moreover, if a learner comes across a difficult word or structure in the text, it may abandon him from listening to the text. Therefore, it seems more useful to do the modelled reading after students get familiar with the text through other activities.

Read and look up technique

As Paulston and Bruder (1967) say this technique was originally developed by Michael West (1941) to give maximum individual

practice in meaningfully reading for large classes. In this technique, the teacher divides the reading text into syntactic word groups and speaks them rather than read them. In beginning levels, the teacher first models the reading passage by pauses or by saying slash where students are to mark word group intervals with slashes. The students then read either individually or chorally, the first group silently, then look up and speak it aloud from memory. They continue with the second word group and so on. The major teaching point in this technique is to train students to read by syntactic units, but it is also remarkably efficient in improving short-term memory.

Shadow Reading

If the tape reading the text is available, the teacher can ask students to listen and follow the text from their own copy. Sometimes, the teacher can ask students to read aloud with the tape. It is useful because it demonstrates how meaning is made through text and how stress, intonation and the pattern of spoken language are related to the word on the page.

Pause and predict

One of the techniques of while-reading stage is that the teacher, if he reads the text for students, can stop at significant points and ask questions e. g. 'what do you think is going to happen?' The goal of these questions is to engage learners in the process of meaning making not to have them verbalize the right answers.

Post Reading Activities

The purpose of post reading activities is to review the content and focus on specific language study such as particular grammar

sentence on the board and asks students to predict what the text will be about.

Predicting from a key illustration

If a self-explanatory picture accompanies the text, the teacher can ask students to look at the picture and guess what the text will be about. Otherwise, the teacher can bring a picture related to the topic of the text and ask student to predict the content from that picture.

Story-telling

If the text is a narrative, the teacher can tell students part of the story and encourage them to read the text for the rest.

Anticipation guides

An anticipation guide is a series of statements which are intended to challenge student's knowledge and beliefs about the content of the passage and students should express agreement or disagreement to them.

Surveying and previewing

The purpose of this activity is to quickly determine the structure of the text and to identify the key ideas. It usually involves examining the title, subtitles, conclusion and pictures accompanying the text. This activity corresponds to skimming which is sometimes classified as a while-reading activity.

While-reading activities

The aim of these activities is to help students to understand the specific content and to model good reading strategies for them.

Skimming and scanning

As West (1941) says "the efficient reader does not drift through the passage like a boat carried by the stream. He drives through it looking for something" (p.8, cited in Rivers, 1988, p.279). Skimming is reading quickly just

to get the main idea and the general point of the text. But when the reader searches for a specific piece of information, a name, a date, a number, etc he scans the text and reads quickly just to find the required piece of information.

Reading for details

After students have skimmed and scanned the text, the teacher can ask them to read the text again but this time more carefully. He can ask them to underline difficult and unknown words and he reminds them of word attack skills to guess the meaning of a new word, e.g. using the language that surrounds the word, using knowledge of the topic, using knowledge of similar words and word formation, etc.

Summarizing the text

The teacher gets students to write a summary of the text. He limits the number of words and sentences they can use pointing out that this means that they must focus only on most important points.

Using guide questions

Guide questions are a set of statements in true or false format which are given to the students before reading the text and they are asked to read the statements and while reading the text to determine their truth or falsity. Dubin and Bycina (1991) believe that the statements in guide questions should address three levels of understanding. The explicit level, which solicits literally stated information, the implicit level, which asks for information that can be inferred and applied level that necessitates relating new ideas to previous knowledge or experience.

Using guide-o-ramas

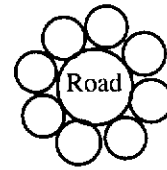
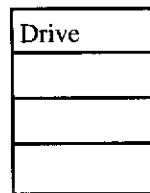
A guide-o-rama is a series of statements, instructions, or questions that leads students

The following are some of the commonly applied pre-reading activities.

Introducing new vocabulary and grammar

Giving the meaning and pronunciation of new words and explaining new structures before reading the text is a controversial issue. Some scholars believe pre-teaching vocabulary may have negative effects on reading comprehension. Instead, they recommend pre-reading activities that builds students' general knowledge of the topic. They believe this activation of the prior knowledge will enable learners to guess the meaning of the new words from the context; then in post reading activities, students' guesses can be confirmed or disconfirmed and activities that check and consolidate meaning can be done (Seal, 1991; Chastain, 1988). Some scholars, on the other hand, believe that vocabulary and reading have symbiotic relationship and one is not possible without the other (Dubin & Bycina, 1991). Decarrico (2001) also believes that unless a high percentage of words on a page are known, it is very difficult to guess the meaning of new words from context. She maintains that "a two or three thousand word base is considered the minimum threshold that enables incidental learning to take place when reading authentic texts" (p.289). In general, pre-teaching key words which have an important role in understanding the gist of the text, especially in case of low proficiency level readers seems necessary but when readers acquire a good storage of vocabulary and structures or as Jeong and Scharlert (1997) call it, a "threshold level of language proficiency", they may be asked to apply word attack skills to get the meaning of the new words.

Various techniques can be used in introducing new words. One technique suggested by Lewis (1985) is called "word-ladders" or "word roses". For these, the word, which is central to the content of the text, is written on the top of the ladder or in the center of the rose like this:



Students fill the other steps of the ladder or petals of the rose. In case of the ladder each word they fill in should be connected to the previous step, in the case of rose, each word must be connected to the central word.

Pre-questions

Pre-questions are comprehension questions asked before the students read the text. They help students understand the text by focusing attention on key words and ideas.

Do-it-yourself-questions

The teacher may tell the learners what the topic of the text is going to be and invite them to form their own questions.

Predicting content from words

The teacher can put a word from the text on the board and ask students to say what they think it will be about. Students will give the words and ideas they think are related to the key words and the content of the passage. The teacher can write what students say on the board and develop a semantic web.

Predicting from title or first sentence

The teacher writes the title or the first

authentic" (p.233). She believes that generally any text that is written to communicate a message is authentic because it has an authentic purpose and conforms to authentic language use.

Ur (1996) also states that with less proficient readers simplified texts are more appropriate and "the use of authentic texts with less proficient readers is often frustrating and counter-productive" (p.150).

Sun- Young Oh (2001) also makes a distinction between two forms of modification to reading texts: simplification and elaboration. Simplification includes the use of shorter sentences, simpler syntax and simpler lexis. In elaboration, on the other hand, unfamiliar linguistic items are offset with redundancy and explicitness such as using paraphrases, synonyms and restatements. Reporting on the result of her experiment of the two types of modified texts with low and high proficiency level Korean students, she asserts that simplified texts can not benefit significantly the low proficiency level students while elaborated texts enhance the reading comprehension of both high and low proficiency levels.

Another point to keep in mind is the difference between simple texts and simplified texts. Authentic simple texts can be located in the real world. However, if authentic simple texts can not be found and the simplification must be done, "it is important to preserve the natural redundancy and other captivating features of the original material" (Brown, 2001, p.314).

Another relevant issue is the length of the reading texts. Language teachers usually prefer

short reading texts. This may be due to the fact that teachers expect their students to know all the vocabulary and grammar points in a text, but Chastain (1988) maintains that recent reading theorists recommend that students read longer passages. She refers to Anderson's (1984, p.94) comment that "research on reading miscue has demonstrated that short items are harder to read than longer ones, because reading involves building up expectations on the basis of redundancies" (p.234).

5. Choosing and Devising Effective Reading Tasks and Activities

The last responsibility of a reading teacher discussed in this article is to choose and devise appropriate reading tasks and activities. Reading activities in general should fulfill two major functions. They should help readers understand the particular texts they are reading, and they should help readers to develop reading strategies for reading other texts. Teaching reading is generally divided into three stages of pre-, while and post reading and in each stage certain activities are usually used.

Pre-reading Activities

The goal of pre-reading activities is to activate or build, if necessary, the students' knowledge of the subject and to provide any language preparation that might be needed for coping with the passage and finally to motivate learners to read the text. According to Taglieber et al. (1988) pre-reading activities prepare the readers for "the concepts that follow, make reading task easier, connect the new content more meaningfully to prior knowledge and make reading more enjoyable" (p.456).

of a text should be appropriate for the readers. There are different ways to determine suitable reading texts. The first is the use of readability formulas. The core of these formulas is the belief that the more polysyllabic words in a sentence, the more difficult it is and the less sentences in a paragraph, the more difficult the paragraph will be. One of these formulas called Fog index of readability is:

$$\frac{W}{S} + \frac{HW}{W} : 100) 0.4. \text{ In this formula}$$

(S) stands for the number of sentences in the text, (W) stands for the number of words, and (HW) stands for the number of three-syllable words in the text (Fog Index, 2004; The Fog Index and Readability Formulas, 2004). According to the instructions, texts with indexes below 12 are easy and suitable for elementary levels, texts with indexes between 13 and 16 are appropriate for intermediate levels and texts with indexes above 16 are suitable for advanced levels. However, it should be kept in mind that these formulas are not a hard and fast guarantee and to ensure the appropriateness of the texts, the experts' judgements on difficulty levels of the texts should be sought.

Another procedure for determining the difficulty level of a text is "cloze procedure" which, by Paulston and Bruder (1976) is believed to be the most successful procedure.

Bowen et al. (1985) argue that high student interest can automatically simplify many a difficult texts. However, they suggest that "texts which introduce only one new word in thirty five can be regarded of appropriate level of difficulty for second language learners" (p.231).

Chastain (1988) also states that the interactive view to reading which maintains that meaning is created through the interaction between reader's background knowledge and the text has led to the view that background knowledge and interest in the text are more important factors that affect the readability and comprehensibility than linguistic complexity. She also believes that an important factor affecting the comprehensibility in language classes is the lack of familiarity students may have with the foreign culture. Brown (2001) also reminding us of the importance of affective factors and culture in the success of reading says, "we cannot simply assume that cognitive factors will account for the eventual success of second language readers" (p.301).

Another matter related to the reading text is the matter of authenticity. Nuttall (1998) defines authentic texts as "texts written for use by the foreign language community, not for language learners" (p.177). She believes that authentic texts are the ideal for the language classroom and argues that "to pursue the crucial text attack skills, we need texts that exhibit the characteristics of true discourse: having something to say, being coherent and clearly organized" (p.177). She believes that simplification carries risk and even with linguistically difficult texts, the teacher should make more use of top-down strategies and tasks, which do not demand detailed understanding. Chastain (1988) also presenting a similar definition of authenticity maintains that due to problems students have with such texts because they are not familiar with the culture, one may think of "materials written by native speakers for language students as

Schema theory suggests that our past experience or the world knowledge we have in our mind is organized into interrelated patterns. This enables us to make predictions about what we may expect to experience in a given context. According to this theory, if students do not have sufficient background knowledge, they should be given at least minimal background knowledge from which to interpret the text.

Carrel (1988) distinguishes between two types of schema in reading. **Content schemata** include what we know about people, the world, culture and the universe, while **formal schemata** consist of our knowledge about discourse structures and how different parts of a text are put together.

4. Choosing Suitable Text to Work on

In evaluating text for reading, the teacher should pay attention to some criteria.

Suitability of the content

Suitability of the content means that the passage should be interesting to the reader. As Chastain (1988) puts it, "interest in the content rises to a level of importance higher than that of linguistic complexity because on reading will take place if readers are not interested enough to continue reading" (p.231)

Exploitability

We should make use of the text to develop students' competence as readers. Apart from the content we teach, we want to teach them some reading skills on how to derive meaning from the text (Nuttall, 1998). Therefore, we should be able to use the text to teach students:

- a. flexibility in techniques: Depending on the purpose of reading, students should be able

to read fast or slow, scan or skim.

- b. Strategies of utilizing non-linear information: Non-linear information is the information that is not part of the text like titles, headings, indexes and blurbs.

- c. Word-attack skills: Students should be able to use structural, morphological and contextual clues to guess the meaning of a word. For example, in the non-sense sentence "The sploony urdle departed", based on the position and format of "sploony" students should be able to recognize it as an adjective.

- d. Text-attack skills: These are the skills, which enable students to get the meaning of a text. Among the many text-attack skills, the following can be referred to:

- *interpreting pro-forms:*

Pro-forms are words like it, our, this, then, comparatives, etc. The writer uses these words to avoid needless repetition. The reader should be able to interpret these words. For example, in the sentence "He handed her a letter. This gave her food for thought." What made her think? The letter or the fact that he gave it to her?

- *interpreting ellipsis:*

Ellipsis is when the writer omits repetition and the reader's common sense should supply the information e.g. "They came although they were asked not to."

- *Interpreting lexical cohesion* i.e. synonymy, hyponymy, etc (Nuttall, 1998).

Readability

Proponents of bottom-up theory of reading, which maintains that meaning resides in the texts itself, believe that the level of difficulty

- distinguishing between literal and implied meaning
- detecting culturally specific references and interpreting them in a context of appropriate cultural schemata
- developing and use of a battery of reading strategies (p. 306)

Paulston and Bruder (1976) also quoting Goodman (1970) maintain that the act of reading depends on three kinds of information: graphonic information (sound/ symbol relationship), syntactic information and semantic information.

It is also of paramount importance for the reading teacher to be familiar with different theories of the recreation of meaning in the reading process.

The first of these theories is called **bottom-up** or **skills-based theory**. This theory maintains that meaning resides in the text itself i.e. text-based factors determine meaning and the reader uses the letters, words, and structures in the text to get the meaning. In other words, the reader builds up a meaning for a text from the smaller textual units at the "bottom" (letters and words) to larger and longer units at the "top" (phrases, clauses, and sentences). This approach is a linear theory, that is the reader perceives every letter, organizes them into words, then the words are organized into phrases and so on. This theory of reading implies that the proper approach in teaching students to read is to teach them first the language forms they need to be able to comprehend the text.

The second theory, which is a newer model, is called **top-down** or **holistic** or **strategies-based theory**. In this model, the role of readers

is considered to be quite active. They predict meaning as they read and they take in large chunks of language at a time. They do not attend to separate letters rather they match what they already know with the meaning they derive from the text. According to Goodman (1967) who first presented this theory, making sense of a text is a four-step process. 1. predicting 2. sampling 3. confirming 4. Correcting (cited in Mirhassani & Khosravi, 2002). That is, the reader first based on his background knowledge, titles, headings, etc predicts the content of the text and forms hypotheses. Then he reads that part of the text. This sample may confirm his hypotheses and prediction. If so, he goes on with the rest of the text, otherwise, he corrects his hypotheses based on the sample he has read. According to this theory, reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game.

The third theory of reading is **interactive theory**. This theory maintains that "in practice, a reader continually shifts from one focus to another, now adopting a top-down approach to predict the probable meaning, then moving to a bottom-up approach to check whether that is really what the author says" (Nuttall, 1998, p.17). Interactive theory of reading not only acknowledges the role of background knowledge, but also it stresses the significance of processing the actual words of the text.

Another important theory relevant to reading is **schema theory**. Rumelhart (1977) defines schemata (plural of schema) as "packets or units of knowledge that represent our beliefs about objects, situations, events, sequence of events, actions and sequence of actions" (cited in Hawkins, 1991, p. 176).

as “a process in which either the participants convert the received oral or written message from language to thought or they convert their own thoughts while speaking or writing to language” (p. 218). The term “reading” when used in reading programs usually means this reading for comprehension.

2. Aims of a Reading Program

Nuttall (1998) states the aims of a reading program as “to enable students to enjoy reading in the foreign language, and to read without help unfamiliar, authentic texts, at appropriate speed, silently and with adequate understanding” (p.31). However, it should be noted that reading will be developed best in association with writing, listening, and speaking activities, and “even in those courses that may be labeled ‘reading’ your goal will be best achieved by capitalizing on the interrelationship of skills especially the reading-writing connection” (Brown, 2001, p.298).

3. Teacher’s Responsibilities in a Reading Program

Enjoying and valuing reading

The first responsibility of a reading teacher is to enjoy and value reading himself and to show this to students and help them to enjoy and value reading as well. To do so, the teacher, for example, can take a newspaper, a magazine or a book written in English to the class and while students are doing exercises or they are taking a short rest, s/he can begin reading the book or the magazine and show off the enjoyment of reading. S/He may also talk about the interesting books, news, etc he has read and

encourage students to read as well.

In fact it is up to the teacher “to impart a positive attitude about the activity of reading. Many students need to be introduced to the idea that through reading there lies an entire world of new ideas, fantasy and wonderment. (Dubin, F. & Bycina, D., 1992, p.201)

Understanding what reading involves and how language conveys meaning

If we are to help students to develop reading skills in a foreign language, it is important to understand what is involved in the reading process itself.

First of all, the reading teacher should know that reading is a complex skill that involves a whole series of lesser skills. Brouchton (1994) classifies the microskills of reading into “lower order mechanical skills” and “higher order comprehension skills” (p. 211). The lower order mechanical skills incuded:

- recognition of letter shapes
- recognition of linguistic elements (phoneme/ grapheme, word, phrase, clause, sentence, etc)
- recognition of sound letter spelling pattern.
- slow reading speed

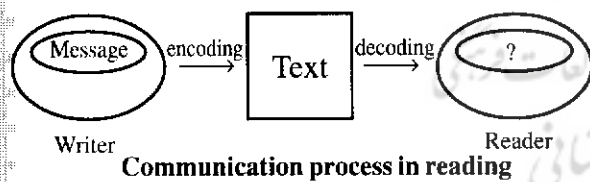
Brown (2001) lists the following as the microskills of reading. These correspond to what Brouchton calls higher order comprehension skills:

- recognition of the plain sense i. e. the meaning a sentence has on its own even if it is not in a context
- recognition of the communicative functions of written texts
- inferring context that is not explicit by using background knowledge

1. What Is Reading?

Reading is often the chief goal of learners in countries where English is taught as a foreign language, therefore, it has attracted the attention of many scholars and researchers. Most of these researchers are convinced that reading is a multifaceted process which involves complex interactive processes that are dependent on multiple subskills (Hawkins, 1991). Thus, providing a comprehensive definition of reading seems to be a difficult task. However, some researchers have tried to define this skill.

For Nuttall (1998), reading is "The transfer of meaning from mind to mind" (p.4). In her view, in a reading process, there are three elements: a writer, a text and a reader. The writer has a message in his mind; he encodes this message in a written form and puts it in a text. The reader, while reading, decodes the written form to get the message.



Thus, here reading is the decoding or identifying the message of a written text. Davies (1995) also defines reading as a "mental or cognitive process which involves the reader in trying to follow and respond to a message from a writer who is distant in space and time" (cited in Mirhassani & Khosravi, 2002, p. 23). Chastain (1988) reminds us of the fact that though the reader does not produce messages in the same sense as a speaker or a writer,

reading is not a passive skill because it requires active mental processes.

It is worth here to distinguish between two different views of reading i.e. phonics or decoding view and reading for comprehension. A phonics view teaches the phoneme-grapheme correspondences and the emphasis is on the sound-symbol (letter) relationships rather than on meaning. Therefore, it is usually in the form of reading aloud. However, to many researchers, reading aloud is primarily an oral matter which is closer to teaching pronunciation than teaching reading (Brouchton et al., 1994; Ur, 1996) and as Chastain (1988) puts it "reading to improve pronunciation, practice grammatical forms and study vocabulary does not constitute reading at all" (p. 218). These researchers support the other view of reading i.e. reading for comprehension. Ur (1996) in defining reading says "reading means 'reading and understanding'" (p. 138). If someone reads the words and does not understand what they mean, he is not reading in fact. In reading for comprehension which is also called "silent reading" (Doff, 1992). The reader does not have to read or pronounce every word. He may confront new vocabulary and structures but he should learn to deal with linguistic material over which he has no control. In reading for comprehension, readers should try to reach a level at which they have confidence in their ability to overcome temporary lapses of understanding and continue reading until they understand the writer's message. Chastain (1988) considers this reading for comprehension a "communication process" in that it involves converting the written message to thought. She defines communication process



Teaching Reading Skill:

What a Language Teacher Should Know

Ahmad Reza Eghtesadee Roudi (MA in TEFL),
English Teacher- Ghouchan

چکیده

مهارت خواندن و درک مفاهیم از جمله مهارت های یادگیری زبان است که به ویژه در محیط های آموزش زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی، دارای اهمیت فراوان و نقشی خاص است. در ایران نیز پرورش توانایی خواندن و درک مفاهیم، هدف اصلی آموزش زبان انگلیسی در سطوح متوسطه و دانشگاهی تلقی می شود. در همین راستا نیز اخیراً کتاب زبان انگلیسی دوره ی پیش دانشگاهی به طور کلی مورد تجدیدنظر قرار گرفته و محتوای آن بر آموزش این مهارت زبان آموزی استوار گردیده است. لذا انتظار می رود، معلمان زبان آشنایی دقیق تری با نظریه ها و مهارت های متفاوت آموزش خواندن و درک مفاهیم داشته باشند و در تدریس کتاب جدید نیز این نظریات و مهارت ها را مدنظر قرار دهند. مقاله ی حاضر به بررسی این نظریه ها و مهارت ها می پردازد و وظایف و مسؤلیت های معلم را در این حیطه یادآور می شود.

کلیدواژه ها: نظریه های خواندن کل به جزء، جزء به کل، الگوی تعاملی، انتخاب مطالب درسی، قابل خواندن بودن، پیش خوانی، اصالت مطلب

Abstract

Reading skill is one of the language learning skills which is of paramount importance especially in foreign language learning settings. In Iran, it is also viewed as the aim of language teaching and learning programs in secondary and tertiary levels of education. Along these lines, the English textbook for pre-university students has recently been drastically revised and the focus of the newly published book is on teaching this language skill. Thus, English teachers are expected to get a deeper understanding of reading comprehension theories and to get familiar with different techniques in teaching reading comprehension. This article reviews the important theories and techniques in teaching reading and investigates the role and responsibilities of a reading teacher

Key Words: reading theories, top-down, bottom-up, interactive models, material selection, authenticity, readability, pre-reading, while-reading, post-reading activities.