

difficult some extra time is allotted for some additional practice. If the teacher thinks that the text can be handled by students, the task of reading will be delegated to them and they will do the reading. Afterwards providing the students with some key words, the students can be asked to fill in the blanks in a cloze test.

**Fourth step:** The final step is highlighting three or four key words which can be used as a clue to guide students to give a short summary of each paragraph. Also, teachers can make some questions out of these summaries. In this way, the students are encouraged to participate in the shared reading activity and thus, interact with peers. In order to make life-to-text connection, the students can be asked to find similar examples or related themes and can be given few minutes to have a discussion on it.

## Conclusion

Shared reading is a technique that can provide a secure environment in which the reading process can be modeled with focus on meaning. Also through rereading at different points of time, it can give the opportunity to the teacher and students to use the text for different teaching purposes. Kats and Boran (2004) believe that sharing responsibility for comprehending the text in classrooms invites all students to participate in the story world. It offers an easy method for teachers to assess how fluent the students have become.

Referring to this short review, we can take noticeable advantages of shared reading procedure in our high school English

teaching classes. Shared reading can bring fun and interest and more collaboration as compared to our previous classical reading environment. The weaker students in such a setting have no more fear of making mistakes. Shared reading not only can have essential effects on reading ability, also through collaborative tasks, it can improve our students' language abilities.

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reading, analysis of strategies used by the teacher or by students when thinking aloud, and explanation of individual strategies on a regular basis” (p. 289). Before any instruction can take place, teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the strategy must be established.

As Parke (2000) maintains, a number of elements common to the various research studies can help the implication of shared reading in the classroom:

- ◆ The experience is friendly and enjoyable
- ◆ A variety of texts are introduced and explored.
- ◆ Students actively participate.
- ◆ Meaning is collaboratively negotiated.
- ◆ Favorite texts are reread.
- ◆ Students are encouraged to make life-to-text connection.
- ◆ Students are encouraged to make text-to-text connection.

Nichols (2008) puts more focus on feedback aspect of shared reading. She believes that teachers’ informative feedback plays a key role in supporting students to develop independent abilities; that is, students learn to take charge and to make decisions about text choice. Hence through shared reading students are encouraged to reach a level of capability to preset their ideas and express their attitude toward the theme of the passage and choice of the words. Teachers in a shared reading class should want their students to develop the ability to think purposefully on their own. Nichols believes that during shared and guided reading, teacher feedback is offered throughout the lesson contributing to the

progress of partnership among students and helping them think and talk together.

## **S**hared reading in practice

Following are different procedures that a shared reading teacher can apply in his or her class:

First step: The primary focus is on the illustrations provided in each reading text. The students are asked to make guesses based on the topic of each passage and the pictures which are thought to offer some semantic information on the text. During this phase the students are involved in a meaning making activity and they are encouraged to talk about the setting, characters, and events. Subsequently, the teacher starts to point out the new words, depict multi-syllable words, segment them, and ask the students to guess the meaning of each multi-syllable word to support students’ word awareness.

Second step: The next step is making syntactic information. In this phase students use their previous grammar knowledge to predict the next word appearing in the sentences. Students perform this task in groups and then the informative feedback of the teacher helps them continue this activity with more self-esteem. These different steps also seem to assist learners to improve their knowledge on parts of speech.

Third step: After working on various aspects of the text, the teacher starts to read the text as the first reader. She/he pauses where necessary and asks for semantic or syntactic questions which the students worked on in the previous stages. If the vocabulary or structure of the passage is too

## **S**electing a variety of texts

It is critically important to choose the right resources for shared reading. The texts must delight the students, offer opportunities for active participation, and have sufficient substance to support rereading. Cooper (2001) believes that different types of texts can be used in a variety of ways. The selected text can be more difficult than the average student's reading ability, because the teacher scaffolds the text. They can all be leveled or placed in a sequence of difficulty progressing from simple to more complex. This can be done using different sets of criteria depending on the age and grade level being considered. One of the guidelines that our EFL teachers can follow without spending much time and budget to prepare suitable material is using available English books in the market; however, it is worth mentioning that the difficulty level of the text both syntactically and semantically, should be higher than the level of the average student of the class.

Moreover, the texts must be accompanied by instructional assistance for developing reading strategies (Wilhelm, 2001). According to Ashton (1996) the interests, grade level, and ability of the group are paramount factors in choosing texts. The content and layout must support the teacher's efforts, and the text must be worth coming back to many times and for many purposes and invite collaborative meaning making.

## **I**nviting active participation

Activating participation in the reading process is the shared reading's target.

Typically, on rereading the book, the

teacher encourages the students to join in and have some discussion on the subject of the reading. Afterwards, the conversation may focus on textual features and reading strategies (Lawson, 2009). In these and other ways text becomes a collaborative effort involving thinking, talking, and reading. Furthermore, when the students are encouraged by appropriateness of the book and the support of the teacher and the group, they will become active problem solvers. Teachers can make it possible for all students to be involved in shared book reading from the first session. Some students will talk about the illustrations, some will listen and watch as the teacher points to the words and reads, a few will predict what might happen next, but all will be acting and feeling like readers. Students should be encouraged to build connections between the texts and their life experiences. They should also be encouraged to collaborate as they negotiate meaning. During these activities, teachers should follow the students' activities and explore their thinking.

## **S**hared reading strategies

In order to conduct a class in shared reading technique, teachers need to apply some reading strategies. Students need to be taught a range of reading comprehension strategies to help them fully understand the text. According to Richards and Renandya (2002) "having an effective strategic reading entails a number of classroom processes: general strategy discussion, teacher modeling, student

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in the early 1980s (Mei, 1999). Button and Johnson (cited in Militante, 2006), state that the main purpose of shared reading is to make shared opportunities for students to develop the strategies of sampling, predicting, confirming, and self-correcting for future independent use. As a reading technique, shared reading can facilitate the collaboration between students and peers with teachers. It can provide a non-threatening context in which the reading process can be modeled and the use of effective reading strategies can be encouraged. Shared reading is a way for teachers to observe how the process of reading carries on and provides students the safety to practice reading strategies in a group while the focus is on meaning. Rereading a text at different points over a period of time provides the opportunity to use the text for different teaching purposes. When teachers choose shared reading as their class reading method, students show greater enthusiasm and higher self-esteem in reading. In this way books are shared, discussed, enjoyed, remembered, wondered about, explored, understood, and anticipated by a whole group of the students (Militante, 2006). It gives the opportunity to learners to become familiar with the target text before starting the process. In their study, Eldredge, Reutzell, and Hollingsworth (cited in Kats & Boran,

2004) compared shared reading with reading aloud and found that students in the shared reading group did better than children in the reading aloud group in the cases of word-analysis knowledge, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Further, the strategy caused a significant change in the ability of less skilled students to comprehend texts (Kats & Boran, 2004).

In shared reading, books can be chosen for a variety of purposes, including attention to word awareness and writing. The teacher's attention to word play provides a meaningful language experience. Reading sections of the text and asking students to listen for particular features of language helps them focus on the bits of language and provides them with practice in listening for a purpose.

According to Parkes (2000), the first purpose of shared reading is to provide students with an enjoyable reading experience, introduce them to a variety of authors and illustrators, and the ways they can reach the meaning of the text. The second important purpose which distinguishes it from reading aloud is to teach students how to become readers in a systematic and explicit way. The teacher models effective reading skills, strategies, and behaviors repeatedly. Also, the language and pictures in shared reading resources provide a rich context for discussion. As Moony (cited in Parkes, 2000) points out: "Personal satisfaction from and the enjoyment of the story, as well as the conviction that reading is worthwhile and that it is for them personally, should be the long term effect of any shared book experience"(p.30).

students should develop their reading skills. Academic success is one of the critical reasons because good readers can understand the individual sentences and the organizational structure of a piece of writing. They can comprehend ideas, follow arguments, detect implications, and expand their vocabulary knowledge as a component of communicative competence.

Reading can be seen as an interactive process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or reading fluency (Celce-Murcia, 2001). In the process of reading, the reader interacts dynamically with the text. Alyousef (2005) argues that linguistic or systemic knowledge in bottom-up processing as well as schematic knowledge in top-down processing are the two types of knowledge that students gain while engaged in a reading activity.

As Hedge (2003) put forward, any reading component of an English language course may include a set of learning goals. Being able to read a wide range of texts, building linguistic knowledge as well as schematic knowledge, being able to adapt the reading style according to reading purpose (i.e. skimming and scanning) are among the immediate goals of reading skill. Additionally, learners should develop an awareness of the structure of written texts and take a critical stance to the contents of the texts. Sofian (2010) maintains that children and teenagers who love reading have comparatively higher IQs, they are more creative, and do better in school and college. According to Sofian, reading helps in mental development, involves greater levels of concentration,

and adds to the conversational skills of the reader; it also helps readers to decipher new words and phrases that they come across in everyday conversations.

Extensive research tells us that students learn and create language not by doing paper tasks in isolation, or drilling structures out of context, but by interacting and using language in a community of language learners. They need collaboration of their peers and teachers in forming meaningful contexts and negotiating meanings in those contexts. As it can be inferred from Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, effective learning does not occur in a vacuum but in collaboration with more capable others. Depending on various factors, a teacher will provide various levels of assistance over various tasks. The goal is to allow the students to do as much as they can on their own, and then as a teacher to interfere and provide assistance when it is needed so that the task can be completed successfully. Based on this theory, students can achieve more difficult tasks with the support of a teacher. This environment is exactly the atmosphere that can be provided by the teacher in a shared reading class. The teacher's authority may have a special influence on EFL students who often lack confidence in their ability to express themselves in the foreign language and may also be facing instruction into a new culture and a new discourse community (Hyland, 2000).

## **What is shared reading?**

The concept of shared reading was first developed by Holdaway in New Zealand

### Abstract

Reading as a communicative activity needs to be supported and fostered during the language learning course. Day by day more EFL high school students feel the necessity to improve their reading ability in order to fulfill their educational requirements. This trend emphasizes the complementary role of reading comprehension in high school courses. The present study tries to introduce shared reading as one of the most effective techniques in cultivating students' reading ability and the advantages of using the technique in English classes. This study also provided the practical guidelines of shared reading that can be employed in EFL courses in the high school environment. It also elaborates on some practical guidelines that can be employed in high school environment. It is finally suggested that shared reading can have a positive impact on the reading ability of learners and even on their other language skills.

**Key Words:** guided reading, strategic instruction, reading strategies, shared reading strategies.

### Introduction

Since English as a foreign language has found its place among other subjects in the syllabus of Iranian schools, it seems necessary to pay attention to the techniques that can promote language abilities of Iranian learners. The main concern of this study is to introduce some guidelines which can help high school EFL teachers to have more proficient readers in their classes.

In the past, reading was considered to be a primary leisure activity; however, with the advancement of technology, reading skill is losing its previous place among people in general and among students in particular. Although some signs of interest can be observed in reading classes, it still involves a short term activity solely done in class. Thus selecting techniques which can change reading to a long term habit is necessary. In fact, teenagers seem to show more interest in other activities than reading books. Our duty as teachers is to find new ways to help this skill find its earlier place among other modern activities.

There are very good reasons why our



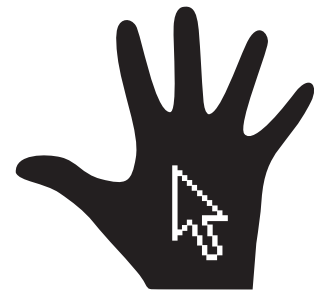


# Shared Reading: A Technique to Enhance Reading Ability of Iranian High School Students

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چکیده

با توجه به جایگاه آموزش زبان انگلیسی در سال‌های اخیر در ایران، شیوه‌هایی که موجب ارتقای سطح یادگیری زبان آموزان می‌شوند از اهمیت به‌سزایی برخوردار شده‌اند. مهارت خواندن، به عنوان یکی از توانش‌های ارتباطی، می‌تواند نقش مهمی در ارتقای سطح زبان دانش آموزان ایفا کند. خواندن مشارکتی از جمله روش‌های قابل اجرا، مؤثر و در عین حال کم‌هزینه‌ای است که معلم می‌تواند در کلاس درس به منظور رشد توانایی خواندن دانش آموزان به کار گیرد. این شیوه برخلاف روش‌های سنتی که مهارت خواندن را تنها فعالیتی انفرادی می‌دانند، به جنبه ارتباطی و مشارکتی این مهارت می‌پردازد و بر اهمیت تعامل معلم و دانش آموزان در پیشرفت مهارت خواندن تأکید دارد. در چنین فضایی است که زبان آموز با حمایت و نیز پیروی از این روش می‌تواند راهکارهای خواندن را به کار گیرد. تکرار در خواندن یک متن که از مشخصه‌های خواندن مشارکتی است، در زمینه پیشبرد اهداف گوناگون آموزشی به معلمان کمک می‌کند. تحقیق حاضر به بررسی روش خواندن مشارکتی و همچنین روش‌های اجرای آن می‌پردازد.

کلیدواژه‌ها: راهبرد خواندن مشارکتی، راهکارهای خواندن، توانش ارتباطی