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Department of English

Module: TEFL

Level: Master 1 Students

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Teaching the Skill of Reading

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I. Research on Reading

Some significant findings in the field of reading research will affect your approach to teaching reading skills, including:

1. *Bottom-up and top-down processing*:

- In bottom-up processing, readers must first recognize a multiplicity of linguistic signals (letters, morphemes, syllables, words, phrases, grammatical cues, discourse markers) and use their linguistic data-processing mechanisms to impose some sort of order on these signals.
- Top-down processing has to do with how you use your background knowledge of the world (known as schema) to comprehend a text. Instead of relying on understanding individual letters, words, sentences or sounds, the reader / listener uses information and knowledge that might come from outside the text.

2. *Schema theory and background knowledge*: Schema theory is an explanation of how readers use prior knowledge to comprehend and learn from text. The fundamental tenet of schema theory assumes that written text does not carry meaning by itself. Rather, a text only provides directions for readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge. This previously knowledge is called the readers' background knowledge (prior knowledge), and the previously acquired knowledge structures are called schemata.

3. *The role of affect:* Affective factors play a major role in ultimate success (e.g., self-esteem and motivation).

4. *The power of extensive reading*: Extensive reading (free voluntary reading) is a key to student gains in reading ability, linguistic competence, vocabulary, spelling, and writing. Hence, it is recommended that a strong consideration should be given to the teaching of extensive reading.

II. Process vs. Product

- The process is what we usually mean by reading: the interaction between a reader and the text. During that process, many things happen. The process is likely to be dynamic, variable, and different for the same reader on the same text at a different time or with different purpose in reading.

- Regarding the product of reading, it is sometimes considered that, although different readers may engage in very different reading processes, the understandings they end up with will be similar. Thus, although there may be different ways of reaching a given understanding, what matters is not how a reader reaches that understanding, but what understanding a reader reaches.

III. Types of Written Language

Non-fiction: reports, editorials, essays and articles, reference (dictionaries, encyclopedias)

Fiction: novels, short stories, jokes, drama, poetry

Letters: personal, business

Greeting cards

Diaries, journals

Messages (e.g., phone messages)

Announcements

Academic writing: short answer test responses, reports, essays and papers, theses and books

Applications

Questionnaires

Directions

Recipes, bills, maps, manuals

IV. Characteristics of Written Language

1. *Performance*: Written language is permanent, and therefore has the opportunity to return again and again to a word or phrase or sentence, or even a whole text.

2. *Processing time*: Most reading contexts allow readers to read at their own rate.

3. *Distance*: The written word allows messages to be sent across two dimensions: physical distance and temporal distance. The pedagogical significance of this centers on interpretation.

4. *Orthography*: In writing, we have graphemes--that's it! Yes, sometimes punctuation, pictures, or charts lend a helping hand.

5. *Complexity*: Spoken language tends to have shorter clauses connected by more coordinate conjunctions, while writing has longer clauses and more subordination.

6. *Vocabulary*: It is true that written English typically utilizes a greater variety of of lexical items than spoken conversational English.

7. *Formality*: Writing is frequently more formal than speech. What do we mean by that? Formaliy refers to prescribed forms that certain written messages must adhere to.

V. Microskills for Reading Comprehension

1. Discriminate among the distinctive graphemes and orthographic patterns of English.

2. Retain chunks of language of different lengths in short-term memory.

3. Process writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose.

4. Recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance.

5. Recognize grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (tense, agreement, pluralization), patterns, rules, and elliptical forms.

6. Recognize that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms.

7. Recognize cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses.

8. Recognize the rhetorical forms of written discourse and their significance for interpretation.

9. Recognize the communicative functions of written texts, according to form and purpose.

10. Infer context that is not explicit by using background knowledge.

11. Infer links between events, ideas, etc., deduce causes and effects, and detect such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, exemplification.

12. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings.

13. Develop and use a battery of reading strategiessuch as scanning and skimming, detecting discourse markers, gussing the meaning of words from context, and activating schemata for the interpretation of texts.

VI.Strategies for Reading Comprehension

1. Identify the purpose in reading

2. Use graphemic rules and patterns to aid in bottom-up decoding (especially for beginning level learners)

3. Use efficient silent reading techniques for relatively rapid comprehension (for intermediate or advanced levels)

4. Skim the text for main ideas

5. Scan the text for specific information

6. Use semantic mapping or clustering

7. Analyse vocabulary

8. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings

9. Capitalize on discourse markers to process relationships

VII. Types of Classroom Reading Performance

1. *Oral and silent reading*: Reading aloud is a form of communication between a well-equipped reader and a set of audience. It is the act of reading out loud any written text which mostly happens in situations such as: reading a report, reporting the minutes of a meeting, reading instructions, and reading something from a newspaper. Silent reading is defined as a form of recreational or independent reading while the reader is in a relaxed mood. It is believed to improve an individual's understanding because it promotes deep concentration of reading a written text. It focuses more on the content of the text which they can apply in real life.

2. *Intensive and extensive reading*: Extensive and intensive reading are two distinct approaches to reading. With the former, the teacher encourages students to choose for themselves what they read and to do so for pleasure and general language improvement. The latter is often teacher chosen and directed, and is designed to enable students to develop specific receptive skills.

2.1 Extensive Reading Materials

- Students should be reading material which they can understand.
- The main goal of this activity is 'pleasure.'
- Students should read specially written materials, often referred to as 'readers' or 'simplified readers.'

2.2 Setting Up a Library

- We need to build up a library of suitable books.
- We should organise static libraries in the classroom.
- We should code books for level and genre.
- We need to devise some way of keeping track of the books in the library.

2.3 The Role of the Teacher in Extensive Reading Programmes

- We need to promote reading and persuade students of its benefits.
- We can organise reading programmes where we can indicate 'number & choice.'

2.4 Extensive Reading Tasks

- We should encourage students to report back on their reading in a number of ways: students can ask questions and / or tell their classmates about books they have found enjoyable, or noticeably awful; they can keep a weekly reading diary; they can write short book reviews for the class noticeboard; we can also put comment sheets into the books for students to write in.

2.5 Intensive Reading : The Roles of the Teacher

Organiser- Observer- Feedback Organiser- Prompter

2.6 Intensive Reading : The Vocabulary Question

- It seems contradictory to insist that students 'read for meaning' while simultaneously discouraging them from trying to understand the text at a deeper level than merely gist.
- We need to find some accomodation: we may encourage students to read for general understanding without understanding every word on a first or second-read through, then we can give them a chance to ask questions about individual words and / or give them a chance to look them up.
- Students may ask for the meaning of all the words they do not know. We need, therefore, to limit the amount of time spent on vocabulary checking in the following ways: 1) **Time Limit 2) Word/ Phrase Limit 3) Meaning Consensus**