

DEVELOPING READING SKILLS IN THE LEARNERS OF SECOND LANGUAGE

Prof Aekta Gupta

GDC Marh

Abstract

William Faulkner, a Nobel prize winner in literature, said, "Read, Read, Read, Read. Read every thing: Trash, classics, good and bad, and see how writers do it." The average reading speed of an educated adult is approximately fifteen thousand to 18000 words per hour so if you read four hours a day, you are likely to go through 60,000 to 72000 words daily. One can thus imagine how many words one would read in your active life of forty years are so . To get the full benefit from this effort it is essential to comprehend properly what the learner read. Reading is not recognizing the sound that a printed word makes is not imitating the sound that a teacher makes (and linking that sound with 8 symbol). Reading means understanding and comprehending the given passage that would lead to reading and thinking reading and understanding and finally to the goal of clear thinking. Broadly speaking there are various reasons for reading like reading for pleasure, reading for information and instructions, reading to correct errors and reading for writing. According to Edward Fry, there are three reading speeds; study reading speed average reading speed and skimming speed. Study reading speed is generally used to read materials which demands total comprehension and retention of its meaning. The average reading speed is used for every day reading of news paper magazine and Notices etc. skimming is the fastest reading speed and is generally used for getting an overall idea of the material read.

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension means simply the ability to understand what a person reads. Strong reading comprehension involves and encompasses a variety of literacy skills needed to interpret and identify meanings within a text. Several elements like fluency, the ability to decode unfamiliar vocabulary and using context clues from the reading to identify key features of a text can all be components of effective reading comprehension.

The main steps that students need to follow while doing reading exercise is as follows:

The first important step is to decode the sounds, the words. Decoding is a skill that relies on your ability to sound out words you've heard but never seen written out. It relies on phonemic awareness, which is the ability to hear individual sounds in words and connect those sounds to letters. Making the connection between a letter or group of letters the sounds they make and is a crucial step to "sounding out" or decoding words. Another important feature of reading is , "Fluency refers to a mix number of different factors. First of all it focuses on one's ability to read clearly with flow without any break. Fluency also focuses on a child's ability to decode new words quickly while reading. Fluency is what it sounds like to read, which can directly impact your ability to comprehend what you read. For example, as a child becomes more fluent in their reading, they will be able to quickly find meaning and an understanding of what they read, which contributes to understanding the text. The ability to decode or determine the meaning of new words can also influence your reading comprehension. When you can quickly interpret new meanings and identify relationships between new vocabulary and familiar terms, you can increase your ability to make assumptions, form ideas and generally better understand the texts you read. Understanding, comprehension and inference are also the main elements of reading comprehension. When we talk about inferences, we are connecting information from texts to our own ideas and opinions that help us identify the meaning of what we read. Retaining, recalling and remembering the text is also important. Comprehension is based on the retention of information. By practicing your summarizing skills and remembering what you have read, you can further strengthen your reading comprehension.

Francoise and Grellet suggest the following techniques of reading:

- 1) Skimming, quickly running once eyes over a text to get the gist of it.
- 2) Scanning: quickly going through a text to find a particular piece of information.
- 3) Extensive reading:- is reading longer text usually for one sound pleasure this is a fluency activity involving global understanding.
- 4) Intensive reading: reading shorter text, to extract specific information this is an accuracy activity involving reading for detail. These different ways of reading are not mutually exclusive. In real life, our reading purposes constantly vary.

READING TECHNIQUES: According to Grellet, there are some techniques to be followed for developing reading skills.

A) Sensitizing:- Involves inference, understanding relationship with in development of the strategies that student need to coop with unfamiliar words and complex are apparently obscure sentences. It should ensure that they do not stumble on every difficulty or get discouraged from the out set.

Sensitizing involves inference: Inferring means making use of syntactic Logical and cultural clues to discover the meaning of unknown elements. Students should be encouraged to make a guess of the meaning of the words they do not know rather than look them up in a dictionary. If they need to look at the dictionary, to get a precise meaning: which is an important and necessary exercise to they should only do so after having tried to work out a solution on their own. Sensitizing involves understanding relations within the sentences. In ability to infer the meaning of unknown elements, often causes discouragement and apprehension in students when they are faced with a new text .It is therefore important to train the students to look first for the "core" of the sentence (Subject + Verb). This technique is applicable when teacher precise writing to the learners.

Sensitizing involves linking sentences and ideas. It is important for the students to realize that a text is not made up of independent sentences or clauses but it is a web of related ideas that are announced, introduced, and taken up again later through out the passage with the help of reference. Hence it is essential to prepare the students in recognizing the various devices to create textual cohesion, the use if reference and link words otherwise he may fail to recognize the communicative value of the passage.

Different stages to be undertaken from skimming to scanning are as followed:-

1) Predicting: this is not really a technique but a skill. It is the faculty of Predicting or guessing what is to come next making use of grammatical logical, and cultural clues.

2) Previewing is a very specific reading technique which involves using the table of contents, the appendix, the preface the chapter and paragraph headings in order to find out where the required information is likely to be.

3) Motivation: is of great importance when reading, partly because most of what we usually read is what we want to read. Reader has two perceptive eyes one is knowledge of the world and the other is the linguistic knowledge through which the learner get motivated for reading purposes with certain expectations.

Both skimming and scanning are specific reading techniques necessary for quick and efficient reading. When skimming, we go through the reading material quickly in order to get the gist of it, to know how it is organized, or to get an idea of the tone or the intention of the writer. When scanning we only try to locate specific information, we simply let our eyes wander over the text until we find, what we are looking for, whether it be a name, a date, or aless specific piece of information. After going through the introductory details about reading, its skills and strategies we finally come down to the class room situation where the learners of the second language hailing from cross cultural back grounds fail to utilize the language to its optimal use. While teaching in the class of general English it was observed that students were not at all interested in reading from the text. They either don't buy the text books or they don't bother to go in details of the text.

In a survey of the different book houses and libraries also the same issues were found. The reason for this mind set was that the students found comprehending the text difficult and preferred readymade notes which were comparatively easy. While evaluating the scripts it was also observed that originality of expression was missing. They all cram or mug up the ideas written in the help books and jot down on the answer sheets which lacked logical unity and coherence. The main hindrance in being original and coherent was the student's lake of the knowledge of the text, lake of vocabulary and lack of reading habits. To start with the group was divided in the class into groups and asked them to write something on their favourite topic. After that they were asked to exchange their notes and directed them to read each others writings, added them and also write their own views. The students exhibited their interest in reading. The aim of the exercise was to develop reading as a habit not as a hobby.

A number of considerations were kept in mind while producing or using reading comprehensive exercises. If reading is to be efficient one should start with global and cursory understanding and move towards detailed understanding. To begin with the task should be of more global kind i.e. Within the competence of the students. Gradually the students will reads more fluently and get the gist of the text more clearly. It is always preferable to start with the overall meaning rather than working on vocabulary or more specific ideas. This treatment is important because it is very efficient way of building up the student's confidence. It was also found it important to use authentic text where ever possible, we have several reasons for this:

- 1) Paradoxically, simplifying a text often results in increased difficulty because Simplifying text may mean
 - Replacing difficult words or structures by those already familiar to the students.
 - Giving a simplified account that is to say, conveying the information contained in the text in one's own words.
 - Authenticity means that nothing of the original text is changed and also its presentation and layout is retained. This will help the students to anticipates meaning by using their non-linguistic clues.
 - As reading is an active skill it constantly involves guessing, predicting, checking and asking oneself questions.
 - This was also taken into consideration when we device reading Comprehensive exercises.

OBJECTIVES

Skills to be developed:- To a student, learning a language like English should be an existing experience as well as a voyage of discovery, the role of the teacher in developing reading skills in the learners of the second language is of vital importance.

The teacher has to keep the learners interest alive so that learning English is a joy, the joy which Emanates from the learners success in acquiring language competences and participating in language learning activities, the teacher can help learners to develop the reading skills with the following objectives in mind:

- Decode Phrases or sense groups.
- Deduce the meaning of the words from the context.
- Understand the underlying meaning of the text.
- Follow the sequence of ideas facts etc.
- Make inference.
- To understand literature.

Understanding and appreciating the literature of the language should be an integral part of a language curriculum. The study of literature of a language demands the use of skills specially reading skills that are much more advanced and challenging. Reading skills can be used to enhance the following:

1. Recognizing and responding to literary text belonging to different genres.
2. Understanding the author's intention and purpose.
3. Understanding the author's mood.
4. Recognizing the tone of a text.
5. Understanding connotative meaning.
6. Understanding and responding to allusions, simile, metaphor.
7. Identifying use of irony, Sarcasm, understatement, imagery, symbolism, hyperbole, etc..

METHODOLOGY ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

With the objective developing reading skills in the learners of second language a questionnaire was prepared and circulated among the students. The methodology was to train the students in the skills of reading and correlated skills of inferring the meaning of the unfamiliar words, to understand the value of link words, to develop reference skills etc.. Certain exercises were identified and learners were made to do them in order to examine and enhancing their reading skills: After analysing different exercises it was observed that the students were able to infer the meaning of difficult or unfamiliar words by linking sentences and ideas through contractual clues. The students also got sensitized to new words and concepts while undertaking different reading exercises. The exercises developed there skills along with increasing their reading speed. The students became aware of the different skills/techniques involved in readings as to full comprehend the meaning of the various exercises given to them.

PATTERN OF THE QUESTIONARE

One set of exercises was given to the students to train them to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words. The skill involved was the deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items through contextual clues. The aim of this kind of exercise was to make the student realize how much the context can help them to find out the meaning of difficult words. The second set of exercise in the same pattern was done initially in their native language to make them conscious of the fact that this is what they do all the time in their native language. In another set of exercise the students were made to understand the value of link words. The skill involved understood the relation between parts of a text through the use of logical connectors. This exercise was necessary to enable the learners to recognize connecting words to understand ideas and facts. Another set of exercises was given to the learners to enhance their reference, anticipation and scanning skills. It included exercises to train the students to use titles and tables of contents to get an idea of what a passage is about. The aim was to show the students how much they could guess about a passage by simply looking at its title and table of the contents.

FINDINGS

It was found that to train the students in the skills of reading and correlated skills of inferring the meaning of the unfamiliar words and to understand the value of link words and to develop reference skills etc., it was important for the teachers to provide the right material right from the beginning otherwise in the later stages it was difficult for the students to cope up with understanding the difficult phrases and expressions in foreign language especially in American English which is dominant these days due to international trade and technology. Certain exercises were identified and learners were made to do them in order to examine and enhance their reading

skills. Similarly enough hints, reference material and complementing simplified material was equally necessary to develop good reading skills. After analysing different exercises it was observed that the students were able to infer the meaning of difficult or unfamiliar words by linking sentences and ideas through contractual clues. The students also got sensitized to new words and concepts while undertaking different reading exercises. The exercises developed their skills along with increasing their reading speed. The students became aware of the different skills/techniques involved in readings as to full comprehend the meaning of the various exercises given to them.

LIMITATIONS

The survey was done on a small sample size.
The group was not that heterogeneous in nature.
Gender limitation was also there because the survey was done on a group of girls.
Age difference was also not much. It was restricted to age group of 18-20 years.
Rural- Urban divide was also not considered in this survey.

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