

INSIGHT INTO READING TO ENHANCE THE LEARNING PROCESS

Reading is considered one of the essential skills in learning a language. It is an important methodological topic in the field of teaching English for both academic and specific purposes. Reading texts are the main sources of information, providing a basis for developing writing, listening, and speaking skills.

Reading is necessary for students for study purposes. The teaching of reading has often involved little more than assigning the students a text and requiring them to answer a series of comprehension questions. This procedure is a testing rather than a teaching strategy. It can determine whether the students are already able to determine certain kinds of information from the text, but it does nothing to provide them with the skills and strategies needed to become efficient and independent readers. As reading ability is a crucial tool in the learning process, reading classes must improve the skills that will best help students to consciously select and effectively use the most appropriate techniques.

Effective strategies that are employed by readers in a foreign language are as follows: looking for a topic sentence in paragraphs; trying to use the context to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words; mentally translating passages where complicated syntax or clause structure has led to confusion (not translating everything); trying to identify implicit logical relationships between sentence and sentence, and paragraph and paragraph. (If these were explicitly indicated, words like ‘however’ or ‘consequently’ would be used.); trying to distinguish major and subordinate assertions; and choosing to use a combination of strategies (skimming, etc.) according to the nature of the text and the purpose for reading.

There are three-stage reading activities (pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading) to make reading more realistic, purposeful and interesting. The aim of the pre-reading stage is to prepare students for what they are going to read by activating

(or building) their prior knowledge of the subject; to make it easier for them to understand the text providing any language preparation needed; and to motivate students to want to read the text. The while-reading stage helps students understand the text rather than just testing their comprehension of the whole text. While post-reading students review the content, consolidate what has been read by relating the new information to students' knowledge, interests, opinions, and connect reading to another classroom activity – writing, speaking, listening.

To develop students' reading skills, the following possible stages in a reading lesson are suggested: 1. The teacher teaches a few key words. 2. Students discuss topics related to the content of the text. 3. Students predict the content of the text from the title/picture/first line. 4. Students scan the text to pick out proper names. 5. Students read very quickly in order to work out the answers to one or two general questions. 6. Students complete a detailed true/false exercise. 7. Students locate topic sentences in some of the paragraphs. 8. Students work out the meaning of selected words and expressions from the context. 9. The teacher draws attention to some of the grammar in the text. 10. Students ask the teacher questions about unfamiliar vocabulary.

The stages except 9 could be organised as group activities. Ss would have the opportunity to discuss their opinions without fear of being “publicly” wrong. Also, they are likely to refer back to the text to illustrate their arguments. There is a natural stimulus for reading more carefully. Four or five of these stages might be realistic to include in one lesson.

The teacher role in developing students' reading skills is to increase motivation in the classroom by making foreign-language reading interesting in itself, to use reading materials that reflect the authentic purposes for which people do in fact read, and to coach students in making use of the knowledge they already have in order to understand new messages. We, teachers, should be aware of the following: the faster students read, the more they read; the more they read, the more they learn; the more they learn, the more they enjoy it; they more they enjoy it, the faster they read.