

TEACHING READING : GOALS AND TECHNIQUES

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Abstract: Reading is an activity with a purpose. A person may read in order to gain information or verify existing knowledge, or in order to critique a writer's ideas or writing style. A person may also read for enjoyment , or to enhance knowledge of the language being read. The purpose for reading also determines the appropriate approach to reading comprehension . The communicative approach to language teaching has given instructors a different understanding of the role of reading in the language classroom and the type of texts that can be used in instruction.

Key Words : Reading, Texts, comprehend, Process, Strategies, Authentic Material.

• **Introduction: Reading** is a complex “cognitive process” of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning. Reading is a means of language acquisition, communication and of sharing information and ideas. The purpose for reading also determines the appropriate approach to reading comprehension . A person who needs to know whether she can afford to eat at a particular restaurant needs to comprehend the pricing information provided on the menu, but does not need to recognize the name of every appetizer listed. A person reading poetry for enjoyment needs to recognize the words the poet uses and the ways they are put together, but does not need to identify main idea and supporting details. However, a person using a scientific article to support an opinion needs to know the vocabulary that use, understand the facts and cause-effect sequences that are presented, and recognize ideas that are presented as hypotheses and givens.

Reading research shows that good readers

- Read extensively
- Integrate information in the text with existing knowledge
- Have a flexible reading style, depending on what they are reading
- Are motivated
- Rely on different skills interacting: perceptual processing, phonemic processing, recall
- Read for a purpose; reading serves a function

Reading as a process-

Reading is an interactive process that goes on between the reader and the text, resulting in comprehension . The text presents letters , words , sentences and paragraphs that encode meaning. The reader uses knowledge, skills and strategies to determine what that meaning is.

Reader knowledge , skills and strategies include-



Date: 27th November-2024

Linguistic competence- ability to recognize the elements of the writing system; knowledge of vocabulary and how words are structured into sentences.

Discourse competence- knowledge of discourse markers and how they connect parts of the texts to one another.

Sociolinguistics competence- knowledge about different types of texts and their usual structure and content.

Strategic competence-the ability to use top-down strategies as well as knowledge of the language . Reading comprehension is thus much more than decoding. Reading comprehension results when the reader knows which skill and strategies are appropriate for the type of texts , and understand how to apply them to accomplish the reading purpose.

Goals and Techniques for Teaching Reading-

Reading Process- It can develop student's awareness of the reading process and reading strategies by asking students to think and talk about how they read in their native language.

- Allow students to practice the full repertoire of reading strategies by using reading material.

- Students practice reading strategies in classin their reading assignments . It encourage students to be conscious of what they are doing while they complete reading assignments.

Integrating Reading Strategies- Instructors can help their students to become more effective readers by teaching them how to use strategies before, during and after reading.

Before Reading – plan for the reading task. Set a purpose in advance what to read for. Discuss if more linguistic or background knowledge is needed.

During and after Reading- Verify predictions and check for inaccurate guesses

Decide what is and is not important to understand.

Reread to check comprehension

Ask for help.

After Reading- Evaluate comprehension and strategy use.

Evaluate comprehension in a particular task or area .

Modify strategies if necessary

Using Authentic Material and Approach-

For students to develop communicative competence in reading , classroom and homework reading activities must resemble real-life reading tasks that involve meaningful communication.

The reading material must be authentic. It must be the kind of material that students will need and want to be able to read when travelling, studying abroad, or using the language in other contexts outside the classroom.

Rather than simplifying a text by changing its language , make it more approachable by eliciting student's existing knowledge in pre-reading discussion, reviewing new vocabulary before reading and asking students to perform tasks that are within their



Date: 27th November-2024

competence, such as skimming to get the main idea or scanning for specific information , before they begin intensive reading.

2. The reading purpose must be authentic . Students must be reading for reasons that make sense and relevance to them.

3. The reading approach must also be authentic. Students should read the text in such a way that matches the reading purpose, the type of text, and the way people normally read.

Strategies for developing reading skills

Strategies that can help students read more quickly and effectively include

- Previewing : reviewing titles, section headings, and photo captions to get a sense of the structure and content of a reading selection
- Predicting: using knowledge of the subject matter to make predictions about content and vocabulary and check comprehension ; using knowledge of the text type and purpose to make predictions about discourse structure ; using knowledge about the author to make predictions about writing , vocabulary and content.
- Skimming and scanning: using a quick survey of text to get the main idea, identifying text structure , confirm or question predictions
- Guessing from context: using prior knowledge of the subject and the ideas in the text as clues to the meanings of unknown words , instead of stopping to look them up.
- Paraphrasing : stopping at the end of a section to check comprehension by restating the information and ideas in the text.

Instructors can help students learn when and how to use reading strategies in several ways.

- By modeling the strategies aloud , talking through the processes of reviewing, predicting , skimming and scanning, and paraphrasing. This shows students how the strategies work and how much they can know about a text before they begin to read word by word.
- By allowing time in class for group and individual previewing and predicting activities as preparation for in- class or out of class reading.
- By using cloze (fill in the blanks) exercises to review vocabulary items. This help students learn to guess meaning from context.
- By encouraging students to talk about what strategies they think will help them approach a reading assignment, and then talking after reading about what strategies they actually used.

Reading to Learn

Reading is an essential part of language instruction at every level because it supports learning in multiple ways.

- Reading to learn the language: Reading material is language input. By giving students a variety of materials to read, instructors providemultiple opportunities for students to absorb vocabulary , grammar ,sentence structure and discourse structure as they occur in authentic contexts.



Date: 27th November-2024

- Reading for content information: Reading for content information in the language classroom gives students both authentic reading material and an authentic purpose for reading.

- Reading for cultural knowledge and awareness: Reading everyday materials that are designed for native speakers can give students insight into the lifestyles and worldviews of the people whose language they are studying.

- When students have access to newspapers, magazines, and Web sites, they are exposed to culture in all its variety, and monolithic cultural stereotypes begin to break down.

When reading to learn, students need to follow four basic steps:

1. Figure out the purpose for reading.
2. Attend to the parts of the text that are relevant to the identified purpose and ignore the rest. This selectivity enables students to focus on specific items in the input and reduces the amount of information they have to hold in short term memory.
3. Select strategies that are appropriate to the reading task and use them flexibly and interactively.
4. Check comprehension while reading and when the reading task is completed.

Developing Reading Activities

A fully developed reading activity support students as readers through pre-reading, while reading, and post reading activities. Reading activities that are meant to increase communicative competence should be success oriented and build up students' confidence in their reading ability.

Construct the reading activity around a purpose that has significant for the students

Make sure students understand what the purpose for reading is : to get the main idea, obtain specific information, understand most or all of the message, enjoy a story, or decide whether or not to read more.

Check the level of difficulty of the text.

- How is the information organized?
- How familiar are the students with the topic?
- Does the text contain redundancy?
- Does the text offer visual support to aid in reading comprehension?
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- Does the text offer visual support to aid in reading comprehension? Visual aids such as photographs, maps, and diagrams help students preview the content of the text, guess the meaning of unknown words, and check comprehension while reading.

Use pre-reading activities to prepare students for reading

The activity use during pre-reading may serve as preparation in several ways. During pre-reading you may:



Date: 27th November-2024

- Assess students' background knowledge of the topic and linguistic content of the text.
- Give students the background knowledge necessary for comprehension of the text, or activate the existing knowledge that the students possess.
- Clarify any cultural information which may be necessary to comprehend the passage.
- Make students aware of the type of text they will be reading and the purpose for reading
- Provide opportunities for group or collaborative work and for class discussion activities.

Sample pre-reading activities:

- Using the title , subtitles, and divisions within the text to predict content and organization or sequence of information
- Looking at pictures , maps, diagrams or graph and their captions
- Talking about the author's background , writing style , and usual topics
- Skimming to find the theme or main idea and eliciting related prior knowledge
- Reviewing vocabulary or grammatical structures
- Reading over the comprehension questions to focus attention on finding that information while reading
- Constructing semantic webs
- Doing guided practice with guessing meaning from context or checking comprehension while reading.

Pre-reading activities are most important at lower levels of language proficiency and at earlier stages of reading instruction.

Match while –reading activities to the purpose for reading

In while- reading activities, students check their comprehension as they read. The purpose for reading determines the appropriate type and level of comprehension.

- When reading for specific information,
- When reading for pleasure , Do I understand the story of ideas well enough to enjoy reading this?
- When reading for thorough understanding students need to ask themselves Do I understand each main idea and how the author supports it?

Using Textbook Reading Activities

Many language textbooks emphasize product over process , providing little or no contextual information about the reading selections or their authors, and few if any pre-reading activities. You can use the guidelines for developing reading activities given here as starting points for evaluating and adapting textbook reading activities. Use existing , or add your own , pre-reading activities and reading strategy practice as appropriate for your



Date: 27th November-2024

students. Another problem with reading selections is that they have been adapted to a predetermined reading level through adjustment of vocabulary, grammar, and sentence length. This makes them more immediately approachable, but it also means that they are less authentic and do not encourage students to apply the reading strategies that they will need to use outside the class.

Assessing Reading Proficiency

Reading ability is very difficult to assess accurately. In the communicative competence model, a student's reading level is the level at which that student is able to use reading to accomplish communication goals.

Reading aloud

A student's performance when reading aloud is not a reliable indicator of that student's reading ability. A student who is perfectly capable of understanding a given text when reading it silently with word recognition and speaking ability in the way that reading aloud requires. However, reading aloud can help a teacher assess whether a student "seeing" word endings and other grammatical features when reading. Ask the student to read a sentence silently one or more times, until comfortable with the content. This procedure allow the student to process the text, and let you see the results of that processing.

Comprehension Questions

Instructors often use comprehension questions to test whether students have understood what they have read. In order to test comprehension appropriately, these questions need to be coordinated with the purpose of reading. If the purpose is to find the specific information, comprehension questions should focus on that information.

In everyday reading situations, readers have a purpose for reading before they start. To make reading assessment in the language classroom more like reading outside the of the classroom, therefore allow students to review the comprehension questions before they begin to read the test passage.

Finally when the purpose for reading is enjoyment, comprehension questions are beside the point.

Research indicates that we built comprehension through the teaching of comprehension strategies and environment that support an understanding of text. Teaching reading comprehension is an active process of constructing meaning, not skill application. The act of constructing meaning is-

Interactive- text and context involvement

Strategic- Purpose for reading

Adaptable- different text for different purposes.

Real Reading- When you read text and think at the same time you are "real reading" or being metacognitive(as the meaning you get from a piece of literature that is intertwined with the meaning you bring to it.) In reading, synthesizing is the process of recalling, ordering and recreating into a coherent whole the information with which our minds are bombarded everyday.



Date: 27th November-2024

Conclusion: For many years , **comprehension is the** only reason for reading. Without comprehension , reading is a frustrating, pointless exercise in word calling. It is no exaggeration to say that how well students develop the ability to comprehend what they read has a profound effect on their entire lives. Comprehension instruction followed what the study called mentioning, practicing and assessing procedure where teachers mentioned a specific skill by completing work book pages. It is plausible that preparation in the nature of the foundational reading skills and research- based instructional approaches would improve teacher's practice to a degree that would be evident in earning outcomes for their students.

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