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BUILDING FLUENCY IN READING

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ABSTRACT

Nonnative speakers of English who are in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom face struggles with reading in English even if they are already strong readers in their native language. The natural tendency is for the reader to translate the words into the native language in his head as he reads. This practice slows the reader down and keeps the focus on individual words as opposed to overall meaning of the text. The reader becomes preoccupied with decoding and translation, losing all but the most rudimentary reading comprehension, requiring re-reading and slowing the whole process down considerably.

This work gives deep explanation how to develop reading skills of young learners of ESL

Annotatsiya

Ingliz tilida ikkinchi til (ESL) sifatida o'qiydigan ingliz tilida so'zlashuvchi bo'lmaganlar, hatto o'z ona tillarida kuchli o'qiydigan bo'lsalar ham, ingliz tilida o'qishda qiyinchiliklarga duch kelishadi. Tabiiy tendentsiya - o'quvchi o'qiyotganda so'zlarni ona tiliga tarjima qilishdir. Ushbu amaliyot o'quvchini sekinlashtiradi va matnning umumiy ma'nosidan farqli o'laroq, alohida so'zlarga e'tiborni qaratadi. O'quvchi dekodlash va tarjima qilish bilan mashg'ul bo'lib, eng oddiy o'qishni tushunishdan boshqa hamma narsani yo'qotadi, qayta o'qishni talab qiladi va butun jarayonni sezilarli darajada sekinlashtiradi.

Ushbu ishda ESL tilini o'rganayotgan yosh o'quvchilarning o'qish ko'nikmalarini qanday rivojlantirish haqida chuqur tushuntirish berilgan.

Key words: Nonnative, proficient, explicitly, influence, differences, illiteracy, a fundamental skill for learner

Kalit so'zlar: mahalliy bo'lmagan, malakali, aniq, ta'sir, farqlar, savodsizlik, o'quvchi uchun asosiy mahorat

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill that we all use every single day. We read newspapers, books, directions, text messages, recipes, emails, safety warnings... Reading is everywhere!

It's not a secret that developing proficient reading skills from a young age is essential not only for academic success, but for success in all areas and stages of life!

However, reading can be a challenging skill that many students struggle to master. And as teachers, we want nothing more than to help our students become comfortable and confident readers.

The nature of Reading

The whole point of human beings inventing symbols is to pass on information to each other. They have done this in many different ways, consider the Ancient Egyptians with their hieroglyphics, Chinese pictographs, Arabic text and Roman text

to name a few. There are not just differences in symbols but also in directionality. These all have to be taught explicitly because they are man-made and not intuitive.

‘An estimated 122 million youth globally are illiterate, of which young women represent 60.7%. 67.4 million children are out of school deficient or non-existent basic education is the root cause of illiteracy’. (UNESCO)

Imagine what your life would be like if you didn’t know how to read. Approximately only 80% of the world’s population is reported to be able to read (Grabe&Stoller, 2002).

Reading is a fundamental skill for learners, not just for learning but for life (Traves 1994) with reading being defined as “...the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately” (Grabe&Stoller, 2002, p. 9).

Why we need to develop reading skills

L1 literacy leads to L2 literacy development awareness. Reading itself builds on oral language levels and key factors that influence (L2) reading skill development include the ability to comprehend and use both listening and speaking skills because you need to:

- Hear a word before you can say it
- Say a word before you can read it
- Read a word before you can write it

What this tells us is that young learners need a firm foundation in auditory and oral skills before they can become proficient readers and writers of ANY language. Learning to read and then to write means the young learner has to link what they have heard or spoken to what they can see (read) and produce (write).

How to explore reading with young learners

Early literacy strategies

Phonemic awareness (grapho-phonics)

Young learners of English need explicit instruction on the link between the symbols (letters) in English and the sounds they make. They need to be taught that there is a direct link between the phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters) in order to be able to start ‘blending’ or sounding out simple words, e.g. vowel consonant (VC), followed by consonant vowel consonant (VC). The UK National Literacy strategy ‘Letters and Sounds’ is a good place to start for ideas on not only the order of letters and sounds to be taught but also the methodology to be used. Once a young learner has mastered blending sounds together, they can be taught how to ‘segment’ the sounds in words they can say. These skills of putting together and separating sounds will help them with both ‘decoding’ and spelling.

Semantics

Being able to ‘decode’ or read aloud is not useful on its own. The symbols carry meaning and so young learners need to be taught how to ‘encode’ the symbols and visuals in order to find out the message being shared.

Syntactic

In the same way that every language has differences in symbols, so they have in the ‘nuts and bolts’ or arrangement of their symbols. The grammar or syntax of language is best ‘acquired’ in the Krashen sense, rather than ‘learnt’ explicitly. Acquisition will occur through multiple exposures to language usage in different contexts. Dissecting language is not very useful to a young learner, however, some simple metalanguage from the age of 10 years old upwards can be helpful, e.g. identifying nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, articles, pronouns and word order. The reason being that there may be differences between the L1 and English and being helped to ‘notice’ these differences can help. A helpful publication to find out differences between 22 languages and English is edited by Swan and Smith (2001).

Developing literacy

You do not need access to a vast library or online literature to explore reading in your classroom. Techniques we have used, and ones learners have enjoyed are

shared for you below. It is important to remember that activating background knowledge when needed may be key to a comprehensible reading activity as;

“Our background knowledge is like a lens through which we understand what we read” and it “allows teachers to unlock vocabulary before reading” (Anderson, 1999, p. 11).

Cameron (2001) gives a very useful list of ideas for creating a ‘literate environment in the classroom’ as this may be the only place young learners see print in the foreign language. This list includes:

- Labels – labeling children’s trays, desks, coat hooks, as well as furniture and objects around the classroom and school.
- Posters – colorful posters are especially eye-catching which could include a rhyme that is being learnt, advertising something, e.g. reading, cleaning teeth
- Messages – for homework or ‘Don’t forget to bring ...’
- Reading aloud – by teacher or older child

Some other activities that will help to make reading ‘pleasurable’ (Arnold 2009) which is crucial for success in literacy, include:

- Focusing on reading fluency may include timed repeated reading (Nation, 2009).
- Running dictation (in pairs, so all learners are involved in reading).
- Learners making their own story books (or comics) to share with each other (Wright, 1997, p.114-130).
- Creating backstories for character in a puppet family and creating a class binder to refer back to when reading peers stories about the family. This can be developed over a semester with learners taking in turns in small groups to create dramas to share with the class in written form, so peers read, and can be followed through with role plays.
- Motivation – ask your learners to bring in materials they enjoy reading – whether it is football results, recipes or song lyrics, use these as a springboard for discussion and reading.

- Make it purposeful – if learning food lexis, bring in packets / tins of food, read where different kinds of food originate from, and classify them by country or by noun basis (countable/ uncountable). (Ellis & Brewster, 1991, p.57).
- Extensive reading is where learners read a lot of easy material in the new language. They choose their own material and read it independently from the teacher. (Krashen, 1988). This develops confidence in their abilities and promotes an enjoyment of reading for pleasure.

ESL Teaching Strategies: Improving Vocabulary Improves Reading Fluency

Nonnative speakers of English who are in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom face struggles with reading in English even if they are already strong readers in their native language. The natural tendency is for the reader to translate the words into the native language in his head as he reads. This practice slows the reader down and keeps the focus on individual words as opposed to overall meaning of the text. The reader becomes preoccupied with decoding and translation, losing all but the most rudimentary reading comprehension, requiring re-reading and slowing the whole process down considerably.

The Importance of Vocabulary for Improving Reading Fluency

The teacher of ESL readers needs to help her readers develop fluency, which is the ability to read swiftly with minimal decoding needed and to absorb meaning as one scans the text the first time. Without a strong English vocabulary from which to draw, the ESL reader is limited considerably in his ability to scan a text without extensive decoding. Therefore, it makes sense for the ESL teacher to use every tool in her knapsack to help her students increase their vocabularies.

Strategies for Teaching Sight Words

For beginning ESL readers—not just those who are young in age, but also those who are young in the use of English—sight words must be developed in a similar fashion to how they are developed in young native speakers of English.

Flash Cards

Flash cards, with pictures of objects, are very helpful in developing basic vocabulary.

Provide Visual Cues

The ESL classroom should be decorated with colorful sticky notes identifying every item in the room—the desk, the chalkboard or whiteboard, the windows, the door, the trash can, etc. Visual cues identifying the objects in the classroom are powerful aids to the student in remembering not only the name of the items, but how they are correctly spelled.

Highlighting Words

When using simple texts for beginning ESL readers, encourage the reader to use a highlighter to mark familiar words in one color, unfamiliar words in another color. This is an interaction with the text that gives the reader a sense of control (even though much of the text may be unfamiliar) and activates prior knowledge. Color is a powerful cue for visual learners. Once the student has identified the unfamiliar words, then he can develop a short glossary and use his dictionary (or the teacher, if the student is very young) to jot short definitions of the unfamiliar words. The student should be permitted to write the definitions into the text so that the definitions are easily accessible and don't require constantly putting down the text to look up the words. This is a technique called annotation and is another interaction with text that helps build comprehension.

To ensure deep absorption of the new vocabulary words, the teacher should ask the student to highlight or underline those words whenever he uses them in writing assignments. Correct use of a highlighted glossary word should be rewarded with extra points. This practice will move the student beyond simple awareness of a new word into active use of the word in context and increase the probability that the student will memorize the word and no longer need to check the glossary or the word wall when he encounters it in future reading.

Repetition

The teacher might feel that it is repetitious for the student to list the words, develop the glossary, and then transfer the definitions by annotating the text. However, repetition can be a strong aid in helping the student to absorb meaning. Another related strategy is to have the student also transfer the words to a word wall in the classroom, where they become easily accessible for future reading without requiring the student to look up the definition in the glossary.

Activities

As the student builds his own English glossary, the teacher should also assign activities that require the student to use the words in the glossary to create activities that would be suitable for other students, such as crossword puzzles and fill-in-the-blank sentences, along with answer keys. Having the student “teach” other students, using his own self-developed glossary as the word bank, is a strong reinforcer of vocabulary. It also changes the way the student views the glossary; it becomes text that he has created, for him to use to help others learn, rather than a simple list of definitions to submit to the teacher for a check-off or a homework grade.

ESL reading comprehension strategies

How many words do you read every day?

Let’s put things in perspective.

Given that, you can imagine you are probably reading thousands of words every day. What you read might be primarily (or completely) in English because, just like me, you are an ESL teacher. If English isn’t your mother tongue, you might be reading more in another language.

Well, either way, think about the way you learned to read English: You learned this critical skill gradually. Your own teachers in the past helped you acquire this ability, and now you can see how learning to read well can transform your world and facilitate better understanding.

Could we say that reading skills come naturally to learners of a foreign language? No, not really. That’s not always the case because the learner—no matter his or her age—should learn reading skills in a way that helps them gradually acquire

numerous other elements of the language. Reading is not learned in isolation. In other words, reading skills need to be built up using effective strategies, and it's the teacher's role to figure these out for their students.

The big question is now: Which reading skills should we teach our students? How do we make sure they are prepared for absolutely anything written English throws at them?

The answer is that they will need to develop their skills so they can: (a) identify the topic of any text, (b) skim until they get the gist (general understanding) of any text, (c) scan and quickly read to glean specific information, (d) do in-depth reads for detailed information and (e) interpret longer texts with more complex concepts.

As a result, our role is to facilitate our learners' skill development in these areas and help them figure out each step of the learning process. Okay, okay. Straightforward enough. But how is this done and what do we have to take into account?

Conclusion

Reading is a rewarding process and can be enjoyed by learners and the teacher alike. Our last note is simply this, approach reading with the intention of having fun in the learning process and your intention will be mirrored by your learners.

Building a strong vocabulary takes time and effort. Nonetheless, it is an essential part of learning to read, whether one is reading in one's native language or in a second language. The effective teacher uses strategies that are designed for deep implementation of vocabulary into her students' consciousness.

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