RESEARCH PAPER

Instructional Approaches and Strategies for Teaching Reading

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Content

Introduction

In this article I will discuss some major trends in reading instruction, reading comprehension, approaches, strategies that can be adapted to benefit students of all levels. We will explore how to teach reading by using both bottom up and top down processes. We will consider strategies for BEFORE, DURING and AFTER reading, aspects of reading processes and supports for vocabulary and grammar.

What can you do when your English language students are poor readers? For many students, reading is not only a problem in their second language (L2); it is also a problem in their first language (L1). This data is troubling because the lack of literacy and poor reading ability prevents individuals from participating in society. These facts prompted me to reflect on my own teaching practice and to review the research on reading pedagogy in L1 and English as a second or foreign language (ESL or EFL) contexts.

Key Words: *approach, phonics, intensive reading, comprehension, preview, scanning, background knowledge*

Approaches to READING

Any investigation into reading pedagogy will encounter a long-term debate about two opposite approaches to help children learn to read. Although there are variations of these two approaches, the extremes are represented as <u>whole language</u> versus <u>phonics.</u>

The whole language approach to reading

Whole language is a discredited philosophy of reading, originally developed for teaching literacy in English. It is based on the premise that learning to read English comes naturally to humans, especially young children, in the same way that learning to speak develops naturally.

Beginning readers needed little direct instruction to decode the letters and sounds of the language. Kenneth Goodman, best known for developing the theory underlying the literacy philosophy of whole language, believed that learners have the ability to decode the letters, syllables, words, and phrases as they read meaningful texts by making inferences about the linguistic data. This process, which he called a "psycholinguistic guessing game," necessarily involved risk-taking and miscues, but he claimed it allowed students to become proficient readers and users of the language. Whole language became a comprehensive way to teach reading and other language skills with concrete suggestions for how teachers can deal with instructional, psychological, and institutional factors. For the whole language approach, it is essential to provide a literate classroom environment with a wide variety of relevant texts that are attractive to learners. Even though students will make mistakes in word recognition, spelling, and pronunciation, they eventually will be able to create meaning out of words and sentences by using textual cues and their own background knowledge to figure them out.

The phonics approach to reading

Supporters of the phonics approach, also referred to as a skills-based approach, point to research showing that children benefit from direct instruction about the letters, syllables, and corresponding sounds of English (Rose 2006; Johnston and Watson 2003). Therefore, the phonics approach claims that reading instruction should start with the most basic components of words, which are the letters of the alphabet and phonemes (speech sounds). As they practice, students blend individual sounds into words and are ultimately able to recognize and pronounce them in a reading text. Many studies have indicated positive results from skills-based instruction. (Johnston and Watson 2005, 8)

Phonics and different languages
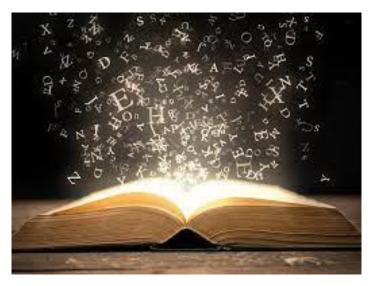
In spite of positive results, many researchers have suggested that the English sound system is too irregular for the teaching of phonics to be practical. English has 26 letters, approximately 44 phonemes, and a large number of graphemes, which are a letter or combination of letters that represents a phoneme. Many English phonemes are represented by different graphemes that are pronounced identically, while other phonemes are represented by identical graphemes that are pronounced differently. For example, the phoneme /f/ is spelled differently in the words fox, elephant, and rough and many others.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is taken to include both written and signed texts. The categories for reading are a mixture between reading purpose and reading particular genres with specific functions. In terms of reading purpose, there is a fundamental difference between "Reading for orientation" and "Reading for information and argument". The former is sometimes called search reading and mainly takes two forms: firstly, reading a text "diagonally" at speed in order to decide whether to read (parts of) it properly (= "skimming"), and secondly, looking quickly through a text, searching for something specific – usually a piece of information (= "scanning"). The latter is the way one reads artefacts like bus or train timetables, but sometimes one searches through a long prose text looking for something in particular. Then there is a fundamental difference between "Reading for information and argument" and "Reading as a leisure activity". The latter may well involve non-fiction, but not necessarily literature. It will also encompass magazines and newspapers, vlogs/blogs, biographies, etc. – and possibly even texts that another person would read only for work or study purposes, depending on one's interests. Finally, there are texts that one reads in a particular way – like "Reading instructions", a specialised form of reading for information. "Reading correspondence" is different again, and this is offered first since the scales start in each category with interpersonal language use. "Reading as a leisure activity" is listed last purely because it was added in 2018.

There are various types (Genres) of Reading:

Fiction
Non-fiction
Letters
Messages
Emails
Journals/Diaries
Newspapers/ Magazines
Menus
Signs
Schedules
And many more!

What is Reading?

- Reading is a process
- Good readers use strategies
- Fluent reading is the ability to read at an appropriate rate with acceptable comprehension.

Principles of Reading

- ➢ Use what readers already know: background knowledge or scheme
- ➢ Build strong vocabulary
- ➢ Teach for comprehension
- ➢ Work on increasing reading rate
- ➢ Teach reading strategies
- ➢ Encourage readers to transform strategies into skills
- ➢ Build evaluation into your teaching
- ➢ Use different strategies to further develop as a reading teacher

Reading Strategies

Intensive Reading
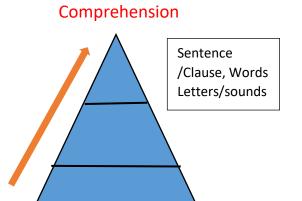
- Read short texts
- Helps students to develop reading skills, vocabulary and grammar knowledge
- Get detailed meaning from the text
- Emphasize linguistics components

Extensive Reading

- Read long texts/books
- Develop reading fluency
- Aim for general understanding

Bottom-Up Approach to Reading

- The bottom-up approach focuses on the building blocks of reading
- Teachers focus on teaching letters and sounds, then words

Comprehension

Sentence /Clause, Words Letters/sounds

5
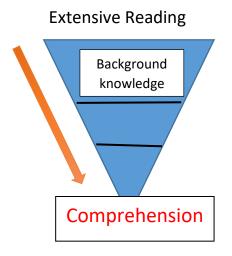
and sentences, longer texts and work towards comprehension in small chunks
- Focus is on mastery of word recognistion

To-Down Approach to Reading
- The top-down approach begins with the readers\background knowledge.
- Readers can comprehend a section even if they do not understand each other
- Focus is on constructing meaning and getting the big idea

Extensive Reading

Background knowledge

Comprehension

Combined Interactive Approach to Reading

As you can see from the model, in this approach readers combine elements of both bottom-up and top-down reading models to reach comprehension. It includes aspects of both intensive and extensive reading.

Background Knowledge
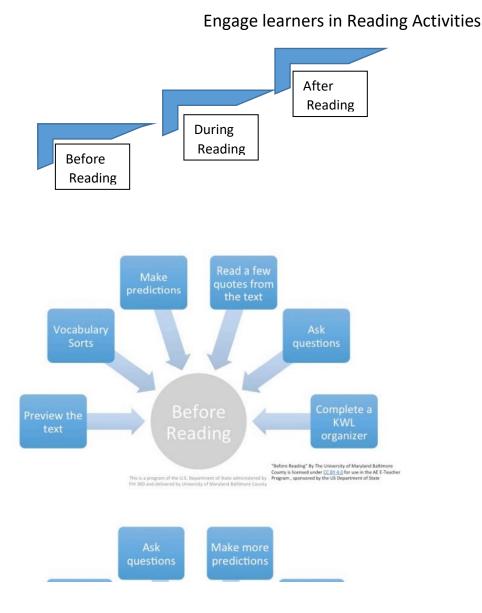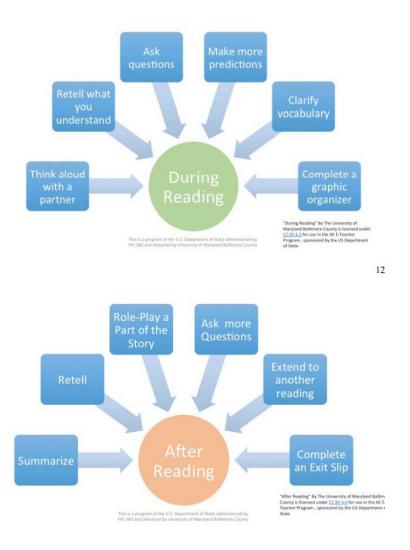
Individual letters and sounds

How do I Teach Reading

A: Activate prior knowledge
C: Cultivate Vocabulary
T: Teach for Comprehension
I: Increase Reading Rate
V: Verify reading strategies
E: Evaluate progress

Engage learners in Reading Activities

Before Reading

During Reading

After Reading

Make predictions

Read a few quotes from the text

Vocabulary Sorts

Ask questions

Preview the text

Before Reading

Complete a KWL organizer

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Ask questions

Make more predictions

During Reading

Ask questions

Make more predictions

Retell what you understand

Clarify vocabulary

Think aloud with a partner

During Reading

Complete a graphic organizer

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After Reading

Role-Play a Part of the Story

Ask more Questions

Retell

Extend to another reading

Summarize

After Reading

Complete an Exit Slip

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Before Reading

Before reading, a successful reader will think about the assignment and use different strategies to prepare for the task. There are some pre-reading strategies:

Preview Texts:

Previewing a text helps readers prepare for what they are about to read and set a purpose for reading.

What would you do if you were suddenly dropped into an unfamiliar place? Would you wander around aimlessly, hoping that somehow you will find your way? Probably not. You'd probably want to carefully explore and investigate your surroundings so that you can gather clues and information that can help you get your bearings and decide what to do next. The experience of reading a new text can be similar to that of navigating an unfamiliar place. Therefore, before reading you should explore the text first to gather clues and information that can help you get your bearings. This is called PREVIEWING.

Previewing involves surveying or scanning a text in order to create a mental map that can help you read more effectively. When you preview, you look for sign-posts by doing the following things: Scan for titles, headings, and subheadings, Skim the first paragraph or introduction, Skim the last paragraph or summary, Scan the first sentence after each heading Scan the abstract (if provided), Make a note of graphic aids

such as figures, tables, charts, graphs, and images, Make a note of typographical aids such as bold-faced or highlighted words and phrases, Scan any supplemental material at the beginning or end of the text, such as chapter outlines, chapter objectives, discussion questions, or vocabulary lists.

Ask Questions:

Questioning is a skill that students should use before, during and after they read. There are different reasons for asking questions before, during, and after reading For instance, you might ask questions to be clear about what you know or want to know, to clarify the meaning of what you are reading, to speculate about the text, to focus on a particular part or idea in the text, to locate an answer to a specific question, or, to reflect on what you've read. Let's talk about some different kinds of question you should ask yourself before reading.

One important question to ask yourself before reading has to do with your purpose. Ask yourself: What is my purpose for reading? Your purpose will change how you go about reading the text. For instance, if you are preparing for a multiple-choice test, your goal might be to identify important facts to memorize. However, if you are writing a research paper, your goal might be to highlight important sections to quote or paraphrase. On the other hand, if you are preparing for a discussion, your goal might be to make a note of important thoughts and questions that come up as you read. Being aware of your purpose for reading will help you to make the best use of your time and effort. Next, ask yourself: What do I predict the text will be about? This helps you identify your expectations and preconceptions about the text. Some other questions to ask yourself before reading have to do with your attitude toward the topic. For instance, ask yourself…How do I feel about the topic? What biases might I have about the topic because of my feelings towards it? What do I already know or think I know about the topic? What do I need to know about the topic? What do I want to know about the topic? And What do I predict the text will tell you about the topic?

 For instance, if a chapter title is called "Ten Principles of Effective Leadership," you might write down the following question in the margin: "What are the ten principles of effective leadership?" Then, when you go on to read the chapter, try to answer the question by identifying each of the ten principles.

Questioning is also something you do while you read. By asking questions about what you are reading as you read, you can monitor your comprehension of the text and clarify meaning. You can construct your questions using one of these six basic question types: who, what, when, where, why, or how. For instance, you might ask" What does the author mean by _____? Or How does this relate to _____? Or Why is this _____? Making statements such as I don't understand _____? Or I was confused by _____.

Finally, questioning is also something you do after reading. The point of questioning after you read is to reflect upon and evaluate what you've read. Ask yourself: What did I learn? Is there anything that was unclear? If so, write down some guide questions and go back and reread difficult passages with these questions in mind. Did I find what I needed? If not, what else do I need to know? Did I find the author's style persuasive? Why or why not? Do I agree with what I read? Why or why not? How does what I read compare to other things I've read on this topic? What ideas stuck with me? Which ones do I want to investigate more? We'll cover more about evaluating a text in videos on Analyzing and Synthesizing what you've read.

Efficient vs Inefficient reading

	Efficient	Inefficient
1. language	The text language comprehensible to the learners.	The language is too difficult.
2. Content	The context is accessible to the learners: they know enough about it to be able to apply their own The text is too difficult and the context is too far removed from the knowledge and learners" 47 background knowledge.	The text is too difficult and the context is too far removed from the knowledge and learners experience
3. Speed	The reading progresses fairly fast: mainly the reader has „automotised" recognition of common combinations, and does not waste time working out each word or group of words anew.	The reading is slow: the reader does not have large „vocabulary" of automatically
4. Attention	The reader concentrates on the significant bits and skills the rest; may even skip parts s/he knows to be insignificant.	The reader pays the same amount of attention to all parts of the text.
5. Incomprehensible vocabulary	The reader takes incomprehensible vocabulary in his or her stride: guesses its meaning from the surrounding text, or ignores it and manages without is; uses a dictionary only when these strategies are insufficient.	The reader cannot tolerate incomprehensible vocabulary items: stops to look every one up in a dictionary, and/or feels discouraged from trying to comprehend the text as a whole.
6. Prediction	The reader thinks ahead, hypothesizes, predicts	The reader does not think ahead, deals with the text as it comes
7. Background information	The reader has and uses background information to help understand the text.	The reader does not have or use background information.
8. motivation	The reader is motivated to read: by interesting content or challenging task.	The reader has no particular interest in reading.
9. Purpose	The reader is aware of a clear purpose in reading: for example, to find out something, to get pleasure	The reader has no clear purpose other than to obey the teacher"s instruction.

10. strategies	The reader uses different strategies for different kinds of reading.	The reader uses the same strategy for all texts.

Types of elicitation techniques in reading comprehension (e.g. questions and answers, True / false + justification, multiple choice, gap-filling and completion, cloze, transformation, etc..;)

TYPES OF MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS .

- Main Idea question e.g. what is the main idea of the passage? .
- Factual question. Positive. e.g. According to the passage, which statement is true?
- Factual question. Negative. e.g. The author discusses al of the following EXCEPT… .
- Inference question. Specific application. e.g. Which of the following does the author imply? .
- Inference question. General application. e.g. Which of the following is most likely to be true? .
- Analogy question. e.g. Doing « something » is analogous to which of the following? .
- Written expression question. e.g. The word « this » in line….. refers to…….. .
- Organization question. e.g. Which of the following details does the author use to support his opinion ? .
- Follow-on question. e.g. In the next paragraph, the author will most likely mention….. .
- Viewpoint question. e.g. what is the general tone of the passage ?

Improving critical reading

There are some activities that are designed to help students become critical readers. To motivate students, we should use authentic materials/topics that the students are interested in. Newspaper and magazine articles published in English that deal with local interest are good examples. Based on Brown's (1994) three phases to teaching reading, let's examine the types of activities that we can create.

Pre-reading discussion:
• warm up activity: discuss different English newspapers, magazines, websites that are published in your country
 • activate background knowledge: predict what the article might be about based on the headline (title) and the first sentence
• provide purpose for reading: in groups prepare questions you think the article will answer

While reading tasks:
• read the article with questions in mind (Were your questions answered? Why? Why not?)

Post reading activities:
• discuss questions that encourage students to become critical readers
• write a summary of the article

It Is very important to help students develop critical reading skills. It could sometimes take some time and some students will be slower than others, but it is worth the time and effort. Students become more enthusiastic and engaged in the types of activities described above than simple true/false questions or comprehension questions.

A KWL Organizer

KWL charts are graphic organizers that help students organize information before, during, and after a unit or a lesson. They can be used to engage students in a new topic, activate prior knowledge, share unit objectives, and monitor students' learning. Here is an example of a KWL chart:

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned

During Reading

 A successful reader will read actively, noting their questions, connections and comprehension breakdowns. They can talk with partners to share their thinking and help clarify what they understand. Completing graphic organizers can support their comprehension and be a tool that is used later for writing.

I saw in the text: (a word or a sentence)	I thought or wondered (questions, connections)
Example "Robots can even play musical instruments like the trumpet." The word: features	Example: A question I have is, do robots have lips? What does it mean?

Predict

_____
Title of Reading

Guess what will happen and then check if your guess was right. This helps you understand and remember what you read.

I predict...	The text says...

Question

Asking questions before, during, and after reading helps us make sense of the text.

_____
Title of Reading

I wonder...	I learned...

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Summarizing

Summarizing:

Writing a brief statement about a longer text that reviews the main ideas in your own words

SUMMARIZING IS HELPFUL FOR

● Checking your understanding of a longer text

● Remembering the author's main ideas

How it compares to quoting and paraphrasing:

Quoting	Paraphrasing	Summarizing
Citing an author's ideas exactly as they appear in the text without changing any words	Putting an author's ideas into your own words	Condensing the meaning of an entire text or lengthy passage into a brief statement that reviews the main ideas in your own words

USE SUMMARIZING FOR

● Reviewing a long text, speech, or video
● Writing an abstract
● Preparing notes for a study guide
● Creating an annotated bibliography
● Answering an essay question
● Writing a research paper
● Recording the results of an experiment
● Describing the plot of a fictional text or film

TIPS FOR SUMMARIZING

● Highlight or underline the thesis, topic sentences, and key supporting details as you read
● Construct an outline or concept map to help you identify the main ideas
● Start by writing the main idea
● Review the major supporting ideas
● Paraphrase information by putting it in your own words
● Be brief and succinct so that your summary is accurate, but significantly shorter than the original text by covering only the most important ideas in fewer words
● Consider your purpose and audience: How detailed do you need to be? Do you need to define terms? Are you writing for yourself or for others? If you are writing for yourself, don't worry about sentence structure.
● Present ideas in the same order that the author does
● If the author has a point of view, include that in your summary
● Leave your personal opinion out of the summary unless you are required to include it
● Provide a citation if the summary is included in a formal writing assignment or publication

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Conclusion

Reading is a receptive action which is one of the four basic skills of communicating in a language. It is reciprocally associated with writing. Writing and reading are parallel to speaking and listening. However, writing and reading are the tangible skills of communication whereas speaking and listening are the intangible skills of communication.

Every literate person can write and read at least in one language. Basically, reading is the ability to look at and understand the meaning of the written words, letters, or symbols. But reading as a skill means much more than that. Reading is a complex process of identifying/recognizing written signs, comprehending the signs, and constructing a meaning of the signs. Reading skill develops when someone takes less time to comprehend the signs and constructs meaning accurately. Different people may read a text differently and make different meanings. However, there is always something universally comprehensive in a text and a person with good reading skill comprehends that easily.