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Թեման՝ **READING STRATEGIES IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Մասնակցի անուն, ազգանունը՝ Տաթևիկ Պետրոսյան

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CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
CHAPTER 1 FACTORS ENSURING SUCCESS IN TEACHING READING IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL.....	5
1.1 Family Background as Key Factors for Preparing Children to Read.....	5
1.2 Approaches to Overcoming Difficulties in Teaching Children Reading.....	7
CHAPTER 2 PROGRAMS FOR DEVELOPING CHILDREN’S READING FLUENCY AND ITS ASSESSMENT.....	11
2.1 Activities that develop reading comprehension.....	11
2.2 Developing Reading Assessment.....	15
CASE STUDY	
Analysis of teaching reading strategies at primary school.....	21
CONCLUSION.....	28
REFERENCES.....	29

INTRODUCTION

The **subject matter** of the current research paper is the survey of methods of teaching reading in primary school. In this graduation paper we have made an attempt to scrutinize the essence of reading and have tried to offer teaching methods for reading comprehension.

We **aim** at studying the reading process at the primary school and carrying out an effective case study that will promote our work.

To achieve the aim, we have put forward the following **tasks**:

- to substantiate theoretically that reading isn't a simple task that students should do;
- to find ways to help students understand the role of reading in their literacy;
- to develop proper reading assessment that will measure correctly a learner's knowledge and ability;
- to work out and introduce different types of activities and methods, ensuring successful reading comprehension.

Theoretical significance of the research is the methodological research on the work of advanced foreign language teachers.

Practical significance of this research lies in the fact that its findings will be of great use to many learners. The outcomes will assist teachers in reading comprehension in their professional development by connecting theoretical and practical knowledge. The study will expose to the teachers of English and other subjects how effective teacher practices influence teaching of reading comprehension, as well as development of reading competences and comprehension among students; it will enable them to adapt the teaching methods and strategies suitable to their learners in order to develop students' ability for comprehension strategies.

The **novelty** of the research lies in the usage of the contemporary methods and activities in reading process.

The **object** of the research is the development of good reading comprehension in English language acquisition.

The **subject** of the research is the process of teaching reading in English as a second language.

The present graduation paper consists of **Introduction, Two Chapters, A Case Study, Conclusion, References and Appendix.**

Introduction introduces all the main points which are included in the paper.

In **Chapter 1** entitled "*Factors Ensuring Success in Teaching Reading at the Primary School Level*" we have referred to many important factors that ensure excellent reading skills. These factors may be parents, family background and student's readiness. We have also

paid attention to the three highlighted methods that were consistently valuable in teaching reading, Maria Montessori's approach to reading. Some comprehension works that will enhance students' interest of the reading curriculum are suggested here.

In Chapter 2 entitled "**Programs for developing children`s reading fluency and assessment**" we have introduced some activities used during three stages of reading. You can also find different types of assessment like portfolio assessment, testing and etc.

In **Case Study** we have represented how primary students master reading whether they like to perform engaging activities during English reading classes.

Conclusion summarizes the results of the investigation under study.

References comprise the material we have made use of in the current research.

CHAPTER 1

FACTORS ENSURING SUCCESS IN TEACHING READING AT THE PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL

1.1 Family Background as Key Factors for Preparing Children to Read

There are many reasons why getting students to read English texts is an important part of the teacher's job. Many of these students want to be able to read texts in English either for their careers, for study purposes or simply for pleasure. Anything we can do to make reading easier for them must be a good idea.

Reading texts provide opportunities to study language: *vocabulary*, *grammar*, *punctuation*, and the way we *construct sentences*, perhaps and *texts*. Good reading texts can introduce interesting topics, stimulate discussion, excite imaginative responses and be the springboard for fascinating lessons.

I think parents and the family environment play an important role in preparing children to read.

Parents are the first teachers and spend the longest time with them (Morrow, 1995). They provide the intellectual stimulation and the emotional atmosphere essential to reading achievement (Irwin, 1967). The characteristics of homes have been found to be more closely related to measures of scholastic achievement, particularly in reading, than to measures of general ability or verbal ability. Such practices as shared reading, reading aloud, making print materials available and promoting positive attitudes towards literacy in the home, have been found to have a significant effect on children's literacy (Morrow, 1995:7).

Parents who practice literacy at home with their children tend to participate in the academic progress of their children by, for example, helping with homework and reading with their children. Such parents tend to monitor the academic progress of their children by talking to teachers about their children's progress and observing their children work at home. Those who do not value reading or education as a necessary tool generally do not become involved in the educational progress of their children. It is the responsibility of educators to inform parents about the value of their role in their children's education and to collaborate and work with parents in order to help their children better.

We can create activities specifically for the home environment that engage the entire family, such as taking a family survey of favorite foods or making a family tree. Where parents are (or may be) illiterate, the home activities should include drawing. If we could create as much harmony as possible between what is taught in the classroom and what the children do and experience outside it, the reading program could become more meaningful for the children. We

could benefit from the help of parents to reinforce the ideas and lessons taught in school. It benefits pupils, parents and teachers where there is parental involvement. The ultimate goal is for parents to be aware and prepared to lay the foundations of literacy for their children before they enter primary school, and throughout their education, at least at the primary level.

The most significant factor in determining the preparation of a child to read is his or her reading readiness. *Readiness* is determined by the child's self-concept, his or her value of education, physiological and psychological maturity, and a desire to discover reading (Irwin, 1967; Spache, 1963). A child's self-concept governs the ability to relate to success, and predict how well he or she will perform a task in their reading performance (Eccles et al., 1983; Irwin, 1967). When children believe that they can accomplish a task, they are more likely to engage in the task, and when faced with challenges, they are more likely to continue working on it until they ultimately complete the task (Wigfeld, 1997; Bandura, 1977).

Before entering school, some children will have reached a certain level of psychological and physiological maturity that enables them to associate relationships between symbols, sounds and words. These children come to school more prepared to learn to read than those who have not reached a certain level of maturity. The third grade of primary schooling should focus on language development and other aspects of reading readiness.

Our role is to be responsive to the vast and varied needs of each child, and to promote an educational climate that facilitates motivation and the desire to read. First, the reading program must reflect the identity of the children. This connection is achieved by using images that reflect *the children's physical* (pictures of people in the community or of the children themselves) and *cultural identity*. If children see themselves as contributors, they are able to take responsibility for the reading process.

When developing activities for a reading program, the tasks should activate and extend the pupils' background knowledge, and should involve real-life issues and interests directly related to the child, and to what that child believes to be important (Ruddell and Unrau, 1997). If the pupils see literacy as a way of pursuing interests and solving personally relevant problems, and/or adding to the quality of their lives, they will be more willing to engage in reading and writing and will value them more highly (Turner, 1997:192). However, to arrive at this perception, the classroom environment should also reflect the children's orientations and beliefs.

Thus, we should also develop strategies to promote a pupil's motivation. If children are motivated to learn to read, they will try to learn to read, and continue to do so, even when faced with obstacles. The teacher is responsible for creating an environment that motivates children to read.

1.2 Approaches to Overcoming Difficulties in Teaching Children Reading

Literacy is the single most important skill children learn at school. By means of literacy, children expand their world and enter any subject or realm on earth. But they must first master the skill of translating visual symbols into speech sounds. Only then will they be able to master more difficult skill of comprehension.

Reading is not natural. This may strike many adults — especially those who have never taught young children to read — as an odd statement, since most literate adults read reflexively and apparently naturally, without any conscious thought. But the skills required to read and write are not hardwired into the human brain in the same way as the skills required to listen and talk. Humans have a language instinct, but it is an instinct for spoken, not written language. We need only reflect on how recent the invention of writing is in human history, and how many cultures have existed without writing, to recognize that humans are not equipped with a reading instinct. *Since reading and writing aren't natural skills, it isn't surprising that they are difficult for a significant percentage of children.*

The basic task of reading is to take a written code and turn it into meaningful speech — in a three-stage process, from sight to sound to meaning. The beginning reader transforms the mute symbols on the page into sounds, then the sounds into words. Furthermore, these translations must be made quickly, because the span of human working (or “*short-term*”) memory is very short. If the process takes longer than a few seconds, some elements may drop out of working memory, never to be recovered.

There are *three* highlighted *methods* that were consistently valuable in teaching reading:

Phonemic Awareness: Explicit instruction in listening to and analyzing the oral layer of language; using games and exercises to teach how speech is made up of words and words are made up of sounds.

Phonics: Explicit and systematic instruction in the sound/symbol correspondences of letters and letter groups, especially effective when directly linked to Phonemic Awareness.

Guided Reading: Instruction in which children take turns reading aloud to a teacher, who actively engages them, not only modeling strategies of decoding but also asking comprehension questions and using the text to build vocabulary.

Aside from the general principles certain methods of instruction have been found to be highly effective. The following brief list is an outline of the methods that reading curricula and reading teachers would do best to follow:

- We must teach incrementally, adding information and expecting further skill only when previously taught information is consistently utilized by the student.

- We must teach clearly. We need to speak to students in ways that they understand. Students should be able to explain back what they have learned in their own words. They should be able to explain to a teacher what they know and how they know it.
- We must teach consistently. We need to talk to students in ways that do not invalidate or contradict what we have previously taught.
- We should become knowledgeable about the English language, and we should encourage our students to think analytically about oral language, printed language, and their interrelationship.
- We should come to know our students, treating each as an individual and using prior knowledge as the basis for new skills.

Here we should pay attention to the *speed of reading*. Good readers translate the visual symbol to sound instantly and sub-attentionally attending to what is meant by those symbols on the page before they drop out of short term memory. The limits of working memory are such that when children have to actively decode — when they have to think about sight-sound translations — they cannot actively interpret meaning. Because most of us cannot pay active attention to both sound and meaning, some people have felt that active decoding gets in the way of understanding for an early reader.

When children cannot make the sight/sound translations instantly and automatically, the we should keep teaching symbol/sound relationships in the simplest and most direct ways until those relationships become automatic. One such way to teach each symbol/ sound relationship in isolation is by using cards with only one symbol on each card. As the symbol/sound relationship is an essential building block in learning to read, it is crucial that the initial emphasis be put on teaching that relationship. It is better to spend time teaching each symbol/sound relationship, not whole words. This principle has been understood for a long time and is the basis of the reading instruction theories of both Maria Montessori and the Orton-Gillingham approach. Explicitly teaching the English code, in all its complexity, works better than trying to teach whole words. There are too many whole words for anyone to successfully learn them all, and a whole-word approach does not teach children the analytical tools necessary to spell as well as to read.

We need a step-by-step, explicit teaching approach because the multiple steps of reading make the process of reading intrinsically difficult. The reader must correctly interpret visual symbols, and correctly connect those symbols with sounds. Because of the limits of working memory, the reader must make this translation quickly, accessing the sound of each word, word after word, rapidly putting them into phrases, then grasping phrase after phrase in order to understand what they are reading. In effective reading, we turn printed images into sounds inside

our minds, doing it so quickly and easily that we can attend to what the writing means. Speed and effortlessness are the keys to reading well.

Gaining linguistic insight is enormously rewarding for us, making the teaching of reading more interesting. By bringing an analytical approach to a student's reading and spelling, we can gain access to how the child is perceiving spoken and written language and then can help the child perceive the language more accurately. When a student reads the word "chip" as "jip," the teacher who is aware of the structures of our language and can say, "You are close — [tʃ] and [j] are brother and sister sounds."

And what about the children who have no difficulties? Won't they be bored? Won't this amount of linguistic detail inhibit the growth of the sixty or seventy percent of the students who are going to read well anyway? In my experience, what this more careful analysis of language does is allow advantaged children to write better, spell better, and become budding little linguists. The whole class gets involved in opening the locks of the English language.

Even so, teaching of reading is complicated by the astounding variety of rates at which students learn to read. We need to keep every student in a class motivated and moving forward with the belief that each will eventually learn to read well. Hence, teaching of reading is difficult, even when we follow good research-based practices. *Teaching of reading requires both science and art.*

The skill of reading is special - and often difficult to acquire. The fact that anyone learns how to read is something of a miracle. Learning to read is very different from learning to speak; in the development of human history, speaking precedes reading by thousands of years.

The human brain is wired for language (Chomsky, Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory, 195:75), but language acquisition does not happen without models, the way motor development does. It must be nurtured through contact with human language models. Children who do not receive models of language in early childhood will have varying deficiencies of language later in life.

Spoken language develops both spontaneously and subconsciously. A two-year old child couldn't be taught sentence structure and grammar rules no matter how hard someone might try. As Maria Montessori said, "The only language men ever speak perfectly is the one they learn in babyhood, when no one can teach them anything!" Reading is different. It must be actively taught and consciously learned. If it's not actively taught, then even a life spent surrounded by the printed word will not teach someone who is illiterate how to read.

Maria Montessori recognized that children as young as two had an interest in written letters. The "*sandpaper letters*" (letters cut out of sandpaper that can be traced) were developed to take advantage of this sensitive period. Montessori had an advantage when teaching in Italy;

Italian is mostly phonetic. Once the basic phonetic sounds were learned, reading proceeded quite easily.

Montessori also observed that writing usually preceded reading. When a child writes, all they need to do is turn sounds into letters. When a child reads, they need to pull apart the letters, turn them into phonetic sounds, and put them back together to make a word. It's a more complicated process. Children in Montessori classrooms often write stories with the movable alphabet long before they can read.

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CHAPTER 2

PROGRAMS FOR DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S READING FLUENCY AND ITS ASSESSMENT

2.1 Activities that develop reading comprehension

Our major task in developing reading comprehension is in the careful selection of relevant materials and in creating experiences that enable children to gain specific concepts that will facilitate word discrimination and generalization. Once students master concepts, they are prepared to analyze and apply these concepts, as well as create new ones.

The suggested reading program should be based on the following criteria:

- *Identify each child's specific readiness for the reading program through classroom observation and diagnostic testing.*
- *Develop a program that facilitates readiness to learn new material based on the children's interests and abilities.*
- *The reading readiness program should focus on building reading comprehension by emphasizing the whole word meaning and whole language. The program should integrate the four components of literacy: reading, writing, listening and speaking.*
- *Develop ability in reading mechanics (such as developing the ability to sound out the pronunciation of unknown words), reading comprehension skills and critical thinking skills, using both fictional and non-fictional texts.*
- *Integrate into the curriculum an opportunity for reading for leisure.*

Comprehension work. I think grammar, sentence structure and themes should be taught using literature (from short stories to maps). Examples should be heavily oral based and based on the eight multiple intelligences. Exercises developed should be both *deductive*, meaning pupils are able to recite what is in the text, and *inductive* (thinking and evaluation), where students are able to guess or create possible outcomes, based on information in the text.

Body/kinaesthetic activity. Students transform a story (or stories) read by the class into a play. They divide into groups and act out the play for the other groups in the class.

During the play, there should be a moment when the audience is asked to guess what is going to happen next. After the play, questions are asked in reference to what the students see in it (summarize information). The next set of questions should be analytical (such as why did a character react in a certain manner to a situation), and finally students should be able to tell what new information they have learned from the play. They should be able to express new knowledge based on the classroom activities.

Reading aloud stimulates listening skills. It helps to familiarize students with the language of books and patterns. It builds listening skills and provides examples (models) for children in pronunciation and expression. It is a good idea to incorporate fiction as well as non-fiction texts. The intonation and tone should be appropriate to the text.

Pre-reading activity: A story about a trip to the mountains.

Before reading the text, we should draw upon the students' prior knowledge about the subject like "Who has ever travelled abroad?", "What means of transport did you choose?" ("Means of travelling", G. Gasparian, English 7). We ask them for descriptions of advantages and disadvantages of certain means of transport. And then preview two or three ideas or concepts that are to be recognized in the topic. Then the students read the topic about travelling, but they also listen to some people's opinion about the means of travelling.

Reading activity: Learners are prepared to listen for specific information, as well as listen to the story as a whole. We want to stop the story at intervals to check comprehension and to keep attention alive. If attention seems to wane, learners may be given a key word to listen for while we read and asked to perform as a physical gesture, such as clapping our hands, when they hear the word.

Post-reading activity: After reading, questions may be asked related to information presented in the pre-reading activity. The first set of questions reflects listening skills. The answers to these questions are found directly in the text. The second set of questions requires processing information and deducting meaning from that information. Eventually, we may want the students to participate in reading aloud, using a story that the children selected or wrote themselves or a story selected by the teacher.

Shared reading follows the same format as reading aloud. The reading includes students identifying key words, either by circling or underlining the words and phrases that they know. This practice is continued on numerous occasions, until the learner can read more and more of the text independently. This may be done individually, with the pupil using a tape recorder with the story being read by the teacher on the cassette. This can also be classified as an independent reading activity.

Paired reading. Children work in pairs and assist each other in reading and comprehending the text. This activity must be guided by the teacher by giving the pair questions to answer based on the text information. It may be beneficial to have older (but still close in age) learners work with the younger ones. This opportunity is provided in multi-grade class.

Independent reading is a good opportunity for students to utilize a learning center. If there is a learning center in the classroom, the students may go to that area and select a reading activity of their choice, and begin reading and working on comprehension exercises. If it is time

for leisurely reading, then the students may want to bring in an appropriate book from home once a week or once a month to read during independent reading. Learners can also make and exchange reading materials. This builds their home libraries and thereby encourages reading at home, and also provides an opportunity for pupils to share what is learned.

Preparing for reading. We select a word, phrase or picture about a key idea or concept in the text or topic. Next, we begin a discussion with the class around this subject in order that students see other ideas related to the idea being studied. Then we may ask the students to look at the text, the title and the pictures, and ask questions that may evoke relevant thoughts and memories related to those items. The teacher builds background information by activating appropriate prior knowledge through self-questioning about what is known of the topic, the vocabulary and the format of presentation. We set the purpose of reading by asking questions about what the reader wants to know.

We are supposed to take note that the subcategories answer the questions *Where? When? Why? What? How?* Pupils will predict the information that they believe will be in the text. Then they read the text and compare their predictions with the information actually contained in the text. This active form of processing enhances the development of effective comprehension strategies.

The reading process: During the reading of the text, the student:

- *Checks understanding of the text by paraphrasing the author's words.*
- *Monitors comprehension by using context clues to figure out new words and by using images, inference and prediction.*
- *Integrates new concepts with existing knowledge and continually reviews the purposes of reading.*

Post-reading activities:

- *After reading the text, the pupil:*
- *Summarizes what has been read by retelling the plot of the story or the main idea of the text.*
- *Applies ideas in the text to other situations, broadening these ideas.*

Various techniques or practices may be used to organize information after reading the text. It is advised that diverse activities be used to allow pupils to express what they have read. Students could return to their semantic map to include new ideas that they learned after having read the text. Students could, for example, write summaries, give oral presentations or act out the text in the form of a play. The students may use other methods of organizing the text, such as those listed below.

- **Description:** *students describe either the setting (where the story takes place) or the personality of one or more of the characters.*
- **Narrative:** *students write a narrative about their reflections on the story or some part of the story that relates to them or their experiences.*
- **Cause and effect:** *a chart may be developed to show why certain characters performed the way they did in the story and the students look for the consequences of those actions taken by the characters. This activity is also good for explaining classroom management.*

Compare and contrast permits students to see the similarities between two subjects. They look for all the qualities two characters or two stories have in common. Next, they look for all the differences between the two subjects. Once they are comfortable with this activity they may use more than two subjects.

Problem and solution. Students identify the problem in the story. Keep in mind that a problem is not necessarily negative. Often, they believe a problem in the story to be something negative, when it is not negative, but simply a goal that the character(s) want to accomplish, such as teaching a sister or brother how to climb a baobab tree.

Story structure and sequence. The practice of putting the story line in order of events, or in sequence, is a good exercise for facilitating comprehension. It enables pupils to practice thinking about the story in connected parts, as opposed to a series of short thoughts. It also shows pupils the format of stories: beginning, middle and end. Story circles are one way of helping pupils to put the story in sequence. Numbers are used in sequencing to put the events of the story in order. Students may also use pictures that they draw, or make copies from the book that tell the story line in order to put the story in sequence.

Information processing involves a chart that can be started before any reading activity. Students begin by stating what they know on a chart, either individually or as a class, what they already know and what they want to know or learn from the text they are going to read. This activity helps students set a purpose for their reading. A chart design called the KWL (know-want-learn) can be used by the teacher on the board or by pupils individually. After the activity is completed they will write in what they learned, which may or may not be the information that they wanted to learn prior to the activity.

Summarizing involves taking out information in the text that is not important and looking for the main points. This activity can and should be combined with sequencing activities. For example, the teacher introduces a story and the pupils read it silently to see how the plot develops. The teacher guides the pupils to develop a story frame and instructs the class in writing one or two sentence summaries for a small portion of the text.

- *Look for the most important ideas that help us know about the problem or the solution.*
- *State the important ideas in your own words.*
- *Combine the ideas into one or two sentences.*
- *Take out anything that repeats information.*

On the second reading of the text, the students will be assisted in determining the most important ideas, and how to combine these ideas and summarize them. After short summaries have been written, the children may cut them out on small slips of paper and mix them. Then they rearrange the slips of paper in order, in the sequence of the story. Children can make their own summary strips from other texts as they become more familiar with the process.

Voluntary and recreational reading. Many children, particularly in rural areas, do not choose reading as a source of information or as a recreational activity. In order to enhance literacy, projects and program involving voluntary reading should be developed in schools and public libraries, by making available a variety of reading materials that reflect the children's interests. If schools have no libraries, then teachers may want to begin by creating libraries using boxes. Box libraries can begin by collecting the few books a school has access to, and little by little adding more books to the box as they become available. The goal is to eventually have enough books to start a library. The box should be neatly decorated or made to look appealing to the children so that they want to use the books or contribute books to the library.

This will motivate learners, foster the self-selection of materials by pupils and instill a sense of pride in building their library. Teachers and pupils can also write and display materials. Parents, friends and relatives should be encouraged to give books to children as gifts, whenever possible, in order to increase the amount of printed materials in their homes.

2.2 Developing Reading Assessment

Assessment is a tool that measures a learner's knowledge and ability. It shows the areas in the reading program where learners have weaknesses and strengths. It shows how well they are able to extract information and analyze what they are reading. The purpose of using assessment is to test that learning objectives (and lesson objectives) are being met. Forms of assessment should be based on, and reflect, what is taught in the classroom. The forms of assessment must be as varied as the lessons and relevant to the lessons, while addressing the different learning styles.

We are not the only person who participates in assessment. Learners also evaluate their performance in school. However, our guidance is still needed to help pupils learn how to assess their own work and recognize progress. For example, a pupil who is performing poorly in

reading comprehension, but has made some progress, may not be able to recognize progress if he or she has not reached his or her goal in reading comprehension.

The goal of assessment is to guide what is taught in the classroom (Irwin, 1967; Carter, 2000; Ruddell and Unrau, 1997). Teachers base instruction on what proven to be effective in their teaching and eliminate the parts that are ineffective. If a class performs poorly when assessed, that means either that the instruction was not effective or that the form of assessment used does not correspond with the way the lesson was taught. In either case, the teacher must make the necessary adjustments so that the students can understand the information.

Testing: Diagnostic testing is a tool often used to determine a student's ability. Testing is intended to be used to show areas in which trainees are strong, and/or areas in which they need improvement. It is used to show teachers what areas of instruction are strong, and what areas of instruction need strengthening. Testing alone, however, cannot accurately measure a learner's performance. In fact, no form of assessment used alone should be the basis of evaluation; all forms of assessment need to be supplemented with various types of assessment. Although diagnostic testing is very helpful in helping teachers find specific problems in reading difficulties, it must also be supplemented with other forms of assessment.

As mentioned earlier, the forms of assessment should be a direct reflection of instruction in the classroom. The skills that are practiced during the lesson, such as compare and contrast, identifying relationships, multiple-choice, matching, etc., should be the skills tested. The information taught in the lesson should be the only information evaluated. Children should not be assessed using a multiple-choice test if that test-taking skill was neither learned nor practised during the lesson. Positive assessment should satisfy the learning objectives.

Observations: Observing pupils is one of the most accessible forms of assessment for a teacher. We observe learners every day in a more formal classroom setting, and out of class casually interacting and playing with peers. When we observe a pupil, we are looking at what interests the child. We are able to know how the child interacts with peers and adults, and how the child interacts with learning. If a child has a change in behavior or begins to demonstrate unusual behavior, we can immediately note the difference and try to address any possibility of a problem.

There are many ways to document observations, such as noting what kinds of books the children select, listening to conversations about current affairs or observing students before, during and after a lesson. We may find it useful to create their own checklists and surveys that specifically address the behavior that they would like to observe.

Class observation checklist: We elect what behavior we are looking for in a particular lesson and lists it on the left-hand side of the checklist. The students' names go across the top of

the chart. This is an example, so only four names are used. During the lesson, we check off observed behavior on the part of listed students.

	A= always	S= Sometimes	R= Rarely	N= Never
	Mariam	Armen	Anahit	David
Participates in class discussion				
Makes predictions about the reading				
Confirms or refutes past predictions				
Uses the reading to justify predictions				
Reads fluently (smoothly)				
Uses the context of the sentence to determine the meaning of a word				
Is able to summarize the reading in his or her own words				
Is able to work with others on comprehension problems				

Portfolio assessment: Portfolio assessment is a compilation of reading and writing samples collected over a period of weeks or months. It is a folder that contains a collection of materials that document children’s development in reading and writing. These samples are analyzed for growth in and challenges to reading development. The advantage of using portfolio assessment, besides documenting the personal growth of a learner, is that the learners themselves participate in this form of assessment. However, this will require some guidance, especially with very young pupils.

Portfolio assessment must consist of a variety of samples. The samples may include book summaries, journal entries, a list of books read and speeches. Students’ work samples also include assignments from written, oral and listening activities, because all are used to assess reading. Teachers and learners look for differences in writing, more elaborate ways of communicating, either orally or written, and evidence of improved comprehension (higher

grades, more correct answers, the ability to write accurate summaries, etc.). Some questions will be general, used for all students, while others will concentrate on the needs of a particular pupil:

- Does Ana express herself more clearly orally?
- Has Ana's handwriting (word formation) improved?
- Can Ana recognize the main idea of a reading text and develop details about the text?
- Has she been able to recognize mistakes and willing to make changes?
- Are there fewer common word errors?
- Is Ana reading more fluently in February than in September?
- Has Ana improved her use of capital letters and full stops?
- Ana's spelling was strong in October. Has she made even more progress?

Questioning and interviewing: Questioning is a dialogue between the teacher and pupils about the text being read. Generally, questioning takes place during the class time. It involves a teacher or a student asking another student to summarize a text; it involves students asking each other questions about the text to determine the meaning, to predict meaning, and to clarify unclear vocabulary and concepts. We may ask questions concerning to a text that has just been read, or a film or play that has just been watched, or a poem just listened to.

Example of a questioning form

1. Summarizing

Learners state what they read. They express themselves in complete sentences and, depending on their level of development, in paragraphs.

2. Questions

We lead learners in discussion about the reading selection. And finally we allow learners to lead the discussion. Learners who ask questions must be able to answer their own questions.

3. Clarifying

Each learner takes turns at being the discussion leader. The discussion leader asks other pupils questions pertaining to difficult vocabulary, words and ideas, predictions and creating summaries.

4. Predict

As class members begin to answer questions, we ask similar questions to keep the discussion going. The last set of questions pertains to making predictions about possible alternative outcomes of what they read (i.e., what if? questions).

Interviewing is a more structured interaction between the teacher and an individual student. We ask the students questions about what material has been read, to make predictions,

summarize, etc. This method is used to find out student's interest in different subjects for reading and writing. Examples of questions include:

Interview

1. How do you choose something to read?
2. Do you read the title of the book before you begin reading a book?
3. Do you read at home?
4. When a paragraph is confusing, what do you do?
5. When you come to a word that you do not know, what do you do?
6. Do you like to read?
7. What do you do after you have read a book?
8. Do you remember what you have read?

Questioning and interviewing encourage the teacher to interact with the learners, to talk to them and encourage them to respond and participate in classroom discussions. It gives learners the opportunity to discuss what they think about a text and practice expressing themselves clearly.

Diagnostic reading: In order to create an assessment for an effective reading programme, teachers, education officers and head teachers must work together to collect as much information as possible about the learners. There are several stages for creating a diagnostic test based on a variety of reports by UNESCO:

- *School officials and/or teachers administer a preliminary study of the pupils, the background of the school and the conditions of the school.*
- *Educators are formally trained to create a diagnostic test, and to ensure the quality and validity of the test.*
- *The educators who participated in and successfully completed the training prepare the test.*
- *Teachers administer the test in selected schools in both urban and rural environments.*
- *Educators analyze the test results.*
- *Remedial work on the basis of the results undertaken over a three-month period.*
- *Educators administer the test for a second time to the same groups.*
- *Educators analyze test results and identify persistent difficulties.*

The following are examples of some of the skills children should be able to perform at the end of their primary school years.

- *Word recognition*
- *Vocabulary knowledge*

- *Knowledge of synonyms and antonyms*
- *Meaning of words from context clues*
- *Understanding sentences that have similar meanings*
- *Ability to describe the meanings and ideas expressed in a paragraph*
- *Ability to create titles to reading passages*
- *Ability to understand and evaluate reading passages in different texts*

Self-assessment: Students are taught to assess and evaluate their work and progress in order to take responsibility for their learning. They are taught strategies to learn a concept. They must next appropriately apply these strategies. In order to evaluate whether or not they have correctly applied these strategies, they must have a self-evaluation form, or a set of guidelines provided by the teacher. In addition, reading journals or diaries are recommended ways of allowing pupils to express their thoughts and reflections, and note their challenges and successes (Irwin, 1967; Carter, 2)

CASE STUDY

ANALYSIS OF TEACHING READING STRATEGIES AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Evidence has revealed that various teachers have various methods of teaching reading comprehension. In the current chapter I intend to dwell on a variety of methods in teaching reading comprehension which have been exercised by me at school; among them *storytelling*, *brainstorming*, *demonstration*, *group work*, *discussion*.

I acknowledge that using various methods helps tap learners' learning needs. However, I emphasize on using *direct instruction* and *cooperative learning* as the very effective methods that would benefit learners' achievement in reading comprehension. With *direct instruction*, you must teach with maximum amount of instructional materials which may be pictures, real objects, flash cards, in addition to the text books if there are any.

It is worth mentioning that the usage of a variety of methods depends on students' abilities; if a method suits Arpi, it is not automatic that David will find the same method fitting his learning needs. When I use a variety of methods, it helps me capture every learner's learning ability and tap their needs. In most cases I implement *storytelling* as an ice breaker when I am introducing the lesson and I make sure the story has some relationship with what the children are going to read. Sometimes I also ask the children to tell a story that is related to the theme of the lesson." In majority of cases I use *grouping(prism)* as an ice breaker when I am introducing the lesson and I am sure this method helps the students to find something relating to the topic.

The observations of six English teachers' lessons testify to the fact that the dominant methods that were seen in action were *reading aloud*, *translating*, *questioning* and *answering*, *group work* and *demonstration*. The lessons observed revealed that the teachers carried out discussions with learners through asking and answering questions. Some teachers say that asking learners to read in chorus is important. At the same time they also seemed to value the importance of whole *class* and *group teaching*. They state that grouping or pairing their learners assisted them to identify learners who were experiencing problems so that they could provide individual support. Moreover, the learners assisted the teachers: if one makes a mistake, the other one will help his friend. Related sentiments were captured from one of my colleague, when she said: "*You tell him or her, this is your child, help him or her at all times. And I encourage each one of them to report about the friend's achievements or problems.*"

As for *cooperative learning*, I ensure that learners learn as a group by helping one another. In this way I also help develop learners' social skills. There is hardly any distinction between *cooperative learning* and *group work* because they complement each other. Inclusive classrooms dictate that you have to employ a variety of methods and materials that can suit all

the learning needs of learners. In most cases I prefer using group methods because it helps these children to learn together and the children with special needs never feel isolated from others.

It is also worth mentioning that some teachers employed the methods of *reading aloud* and *chorusing unknowingly*. It was also interesting to note that the teachers understood the purpose of group teaching as well as individual teaching which was mainly to assist the learners, but in practice I did not see any paired groups or an individual help other learners. This discrepancy might be the result of lack of enough instructional materials and lack of knowledge on how to facilitate reading comprehension or it was due to the big numbers that the teachers were faced with in their classrooms. This, therefore, implied that teachers required the theoretical knowledge of the methods in order to be able to accommodate every learner's needs in the classroom, since what seemed to emerge from these responses was that the teachers seemed to be aware that they taught learners with different comprehension abilities.

Now I will try to clarify comments about reading methods that are mentioned above with my personal experience and investigation.

In recent years, researchers have given more attention to reading engagement, particularly at the primary school because of studies that have shown a relationship between reading engagement and reading achievement. Many reading engagement studies have focused primarily on native-English-speaking students. There is little research which has focused specifically on English learners' (ELs) reading engagement, particularly for primary grades ELs.

The primary school level is a critical and complex transition period for ELs and transitioning to high school can be even more tenuous for ELs. This level is also the time when students generally exhibit a decline in reading motivation and reading engagement.

This study investigates the reading engagement of primary school English learners in their English as a Second Language classroom. Students with high levels of reading engagement are those who a) are motivated to read, b) use strategies when reading, c) use reading as a way to construct meaning from texts, d) participate in social interactions around reading. This study focuses on all four aspects of reading engagement and explores whether there are any additional components that should be considered with English learners' reading engagement. Findings from this case study research indicate that all four components are essential to consider with English learners' reading engagement. Results of this study also reveal that English learners' identities are an essential component of their reading engagement.

I have conducted a qualitative study to provide a more complete picture of ELs' reading engagement. I have chosen a case study design to describe and interpret primary and high school level ELs' reading engagement in their English as a Second Language (ESL) or English

classroom to better understand the literacy development of young adolescent ELs. In particular I have focused on the following research questions:

1. What motivates or discourages middle level ELs to read in English?
2. What strategic knowledge do middle level ELs draw upon when reading?
3. What are the ways in which middle level ELs construct meaning from texts?
4. In what kinds of social interactions do middle level ELs engage around texts?
5. What other factors must be considered in relation to ELs' reading engagement?

School Setting-This study was conducted at the 2nd Primary School after Paruyr Sevak in Ararat. At Primary school English is taught twice a week in the 6th, 7th and 9th grade and in the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 8th grade it is taught three times a week. The lesson lasts 45 minutes.

Participants- Totally I have seven classrooms where English is taught. There are 18-28 students in each class at Primary school and I can say that they are very good readers and can comprehend the text without difficulties. Some students have some difficulties while decoding the text and a few students have a very poor comprehension and lack of correct decoding. So, during my lessons I have tried to minimize their difficulties and inspire confidence. I always advise them not to get embarrassed if they make mistakes as my responsibility is to help them to learn.

I have used various sources in this study to gather data on each of the four components, which allowed me to offer a quaternary view of reading engagement.

I have taught and at the same time observed the students of the primary school twice a week in their ESL/English classes. There are lots of activities and methods we can do to help enhance students' comprehension, such as ones that activate their schemata or background knowledge, arouse their interest in the topic or prepare them linguistically in the pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading stages.

One of the objectives in the pre-reading stage is to introduce some background information, aiding students to acquire some messages about the texts, like new words, cultural points and some other text-related questions. As interest is the best teacher, teachers are supposed to design activities based on students' real life and curiosity with strategies of leading in the necessary points. After students have acquired some background information of a text and a reading story, teachers can make good use of this kind of schematic knowledge to help students predict, and these background information is good for reading. The common methods are *topics*, *questioning*, *making suspense*, *video* or *songs*, we can also use *grouping*, *brainstorming*, *prism*, *Sneak preview*, *Ideas continuum*, *A carousel of ideas* and others.

The while-reading stage should focus on guiding students to read with skills and curiosity under the guidance of teachers. To get information is one of the necessary goals in reading, to be

familiar with certain sentence structures and language points, to be curious about the discourse are the three basic comprehensive goals at this stage. Teachers need to design activities parallel to the reality, such as *match*, *sequencing*, *blank filling*, *question answering*, *T-shape table*, *System of Interactive Signs*, *Idea map*, *Jigsaw*, *a Talk*, *Paraphrasing*, *a Walk in the Gallery* and others. Post-reading will involve some cognitive activities, enhancing students to use the language pragmatically, and activities can be *Role-play*, *Text retelling*, *Survey*, *Debate*, *Poster making*, *Venn's diagram*, *KWL*, *Quadruple*, *Drama*, *Questioning* and others.

The students begin learning English in the 3rd grade. The beginning of the language acquisition is very important, and the teacher should conduct lessons with the help of different methods and activities or games sow seeds of love to the language. For teaching to read the letters, I have made worksheets with different activities and given them to the students.

During my lessons I have tried to observe each student to find out what kind of problem of reading worries them. Sometimes I have had meetings with their parents to guess what kind of strategy I should take up for having good results in their children's teaching.

The 4th grade students are already able to read a text and comprehend with fewer difficulties. I have used difficult methods that help the students to get engaged in reading. In the process of teaching a text, a teacher can try to guide students to feel the whole story, when teaching a word, it should be in a context. When covering, for instance, the topic "*sports*", I present information by using pictures of various sports and sportsmen and ask the students what they can see, what they like; then in the post-reading stage, students can work in pairs, and they are encouraged to make up a dialogue with the help of a sample dialogue on my part. In this way, students will have the realization that language learned in class can be applied in real life. It varies in forms from a word, a phrase, a single sentence or even to a sense group and an article, a book. As long as the language can transmit information, students are encouraged to use it to communicate appropriately. Thus, I have created a real and a sensible context to teach words, sentences, or the texts which will not only arouse students interest in learning English but also promote their reading efficiency.

There are different methods for teaching 5th grad students to read a text. They should feel confident and never feel shame of making mistakes. For the beginning I offer *Sneak preview* activity. Students open their books and look through the text for just 20 seconds ("*The Frog Prince*"). The idea is for them to get as much information as possible in a short space of time so they scan the text for key words that include the most important information. In the course of reading I interrupt the students and ask them such kind of questions: "*What do you think will happen next*"? or "*What do you the princess will do*"? And at the end the students do a role play. I choose two or three of the characters in the text and students imagine what they would say

to each other and carry out a role play. This is a good way of developing creativity and imagination as the dialogue goes beyond what is in the text.

The 6th grade students like reading texts with the help of different activities and methods. Many students do not have the habit of reading after class, partly due to several reasons like lacking for teachers' guidance. For engaging the students in reading, I do *grouping and Ideas continuum activities*. These activities help students think about how much they know about a topic and share ideas with each other. I draw a horizontal line on the board. At one end write '*I know a lot about this*' and at the other end I write '*I know very little about this*'. The teacher offers a topic or an idea that relate to the text. Students decide how much knowledge they already have about the topic and write them on the line in their notebooks, so if the topic is Armenia and the student knows quite a lot, they write "Armenia" towards the "I know a lot about this" end.

Students compare their existing knowledge and those who know a little about one of the topics find someone who knows more than them and they tell each other what they know. And in the final part of the lesson the students debate and share ideas about the topic.

My 7th grade students are very active and want to know a lot of things about the author of the text. It is very interesting to work with them and use many activities. In the pre-reading stage I present words with pictures, arousing students' interest. As students have learnt some other food, a teacher can design activities to review the words by asking students what food they like, then playing a game "what's missing"; and ask students to question each other with the structure "what did you have for breakfast, lunch and dinner?" to consolidate the words in a lively atmosphere. In the activities above, the word activities are relative to students' real life, and they will be curious about the new words and then, the structure has been covered. So, it is a good presentation to the text ("*My Meals*"). One step to help students read efficiently is to help them predict, for this is one strategy people always use in searching information from the Internet. About this text, teachers can ask students to find information about meals of different nations. In the while-reading stage I sometimes ask the students to paraphrase the text and make questions about it. One of the post reading activities can be: each student will have a survey about what other students had for breakfast, lunch and dinner yesterday. Here, teachers need to pay attention to the function of the structure and the pragmatics. They can offer students a sample about asking for information politely, for instance: Hello, can I ask you some questions. "What did you have for breakfast yesterday"? "And what did you have for lunch yesterday"? ... Do you like...? Give students sufficient time, or leave it as an assignment.

Languages are abundant in special cultures of a nation, and so the process of learning English cannot be separated from introducing cultures. Penetrating interesting cultural points can

not only arouse students' curiosity but also help them understand the reading text better. There is some background of life styles, traditions of English countries, such as their capital, important holidays, symbols. If teachers introduce these points through pictures and video clips, students of the 8th grade will be more glad to accept and read the texts as they like to study with different methods and activities. For instance, when teaching *Customs and Holidays of the UK*, a teacher can show students some pictures and videos about how the British people celebrate their holidays. In the reading process students generate true and false sentences. After reading the text, students work in groups and write two true and two false sentences about the text. They give their sentences to another group who have to decide which are true and which are false, and correct the false ones. Finally, they give their answers to the original group who correct them. Again, they love correcting each other's answers.

The 9th grade students are partially independent and can help teacher to conduct the lesson making it interesting and full of various activities. In the pre-reading stage the students suggest to do *A carousel of ideas*. This activity helps them to find out what they already know about a topic and encourages them to share ideas about topics before they read a text ("*Daily Bread*"). Before students read a text, I choose four topics that relate to the text that would be useful for students to think about before reading. I take a large piece of paper and divide it into four triangles by drawing diagonal lines from opposite corners. I write one of the topics in each of the triangles in the center of the piece of paper. Four students sit around the piece of paper and are given a time limit e.g. one minute. They write as many ideas as possible relating to the topic in their triangle. When the time's up, they rotate the piece of paper and have another minute. This time, they read the ideas already written down and add new ones to it. After a minute, they rotate the paper again and add more ideas. Repeat one last time until all students have written in each triangle. They then read all the ideas in each triangle. Then the students begin reading and at the same time using a system of interactive signs.

So, the cultivation of reading ability should be stressed in the reading class, and consolidated after class. In other word, all of the other reading activities after class should be centered on the teaching activities in class, to promote students' comprehensive ability through the additional materials and accumulating of words and skills. In-class activities should be designed specially to guide students to read with skills, which are good reading habits beneficial to future learning, great interest.

Actually, in primary reading class, teachers cannot separate each reading activity from other skills, the purpose of reading may be to help students to write a letter, or to introduce an interesting topic to classmates. Only understanding the interrelations of the comprehensive activities, can reading activities make sense in each class. A whole reading class should consist

of three stages, with each embodying the progress of students' reading skills, the development of cognition, the abundance of culture and the sound promotion of an individual as a whole person.

CONCLUSION

The research reported in this thesis revealed that

- Reading gives us great opportunities for studying vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and the way we construct sentences.
- Reading many books doesn't mean being good readers; we should be able to understand the message of the writer that he wants to deliver with the help of his work.
- The purpose of all communication is sharing the meaning while the purpose of all reading is comprehension of meanings.
- Reading is more than the ability to identify or to pronounce words.
- Students need to be engaged while they are reading with the content of the text, not just its language.
- Since reading isn't a natural skill, it is difficult for a significant percentage of children to read.
- Speed and effortlessness are the keys to reading well.
- A teacher needs to keep every child in a class motivated and moving forward with the belief that each will eventually learn to read well.
- Teachers can enhance students' interest and reading fluency, with the help of different activities and methods, carried out at pre-reading, reading and post-reading stages.
- Various forms of assessment are of great importance and their goal is to guide what is taught in the classroom.
- Delving into ELs' reading engagement can be very beneficial since it provides a wealth of information about students' motivation, strategic knowledge, conceptual knowledge, social interactions, especially in high school when students are encountering increasingly more complex texts and concepts.
- Reading and writing, not being natural skills are difficult for a significant percentage of children.
- Learners are getting more engaged with the topic if we use different methods and activities.

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