

How to teach reading skills

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Abstract

The importance of reading lies in its ability to expand knowledge, stimulate critical thinking, and enhance creativity. And reading skills are of paramount importance as they enable students to grasp complex ideas, improve language proficiency, foster analytical thinking, and succeed academically and beyond. Based on results collected through quantitative research of questionnaires and interviews done by universities students in Jiangsu province, this paper will first analyze the problems facing to students, then providing some effective measures on how to teach and improve reading skills from various perspectives.

Keywords

Reading skills; Reading strategies; language acquisition

1. Introduction

Reading, as one of the most direct and effective ways for EFL learners to obtain information, functions a basic part in our daily life and English teaching class. Through the process of reading, student's language competence, learning abilities, learning strategies and cultural awareness will foster gradually. Besides, with the gradual deepening of the new curriculum reform, the objectives of English teaching have also been adjusted to a certain extent, which is reflected in the examination which increasing the weight of English reading comprehension. In such case, high school English teachers should pay more attention to the theory and practice of English reading.

2. Problems facing to students in reading

2.1. Lack of interests

The reasons that account for students' problems in lacking of interests may from various aspects.

For the teachers, some teachers still employ the traditional single explanatory teaching method and follow the steps of vocabulary description, sentence structure analysis, grammar explanation, discourse translation, problem solving, etc when to carry out the reading practices. While such form of learning is always teach-

er-centered, leaving students in a state of passive. If the situation keeps a lasting period of time, their motivation will be dampened largely and the development of mental flexibility is greatly affected, and students will become resistant to learning English reading gradually. (Hui,2023)

For the students, some students may reckon it is boring and hard to read a passage especially the text contains too many unknown words and expressions, and they just own on willingness to continue reading.

2.2. Lack of scientific reading skill instruction

One issue is that some teachers still carry out "knowledge-based" teaching. It is manifested in the fact that teachers pay too much attention to the explanation of knowledge points and the large classroom time is used to explain language knowledge, but reading instruction is neglected.

2.3 Lack of comprehension

Some students fail to have a sound command of English, including basic understanding of words meaning, grammatical knowledge, and if they do not know the meaning of each words how can they try to understand the main idea of the passage, letting alone use reading skills.

3. How to teach reading skills

After having a general understanding about the challenges facing to students in reading, then this paper tries to provide some appropriate ways to enhance students' reading skills.

3.1. Access the learners

Learners may vary from each other at different learning stages or even at one stage. Thus it is advisable to adopt different approaches targeting various stages of English learners.

For beginning learners, teaching should focus on building foundational vocabularies and basic grammar through interactive activities like flashcards, songs, and simple dialogue. Moreover, designing some listening and speaking practices to enhance their knowledge and stimulate their interests about English learning. What is more, emphasizing phonics and sight words while encouraging repeated reading to build familiarity and confidence.

For intermediate level learners, it would be better to introduce diverse materials like short stories, articles, or adapted novels. Then in the process of reading, teachers can guide them to find out how to do skimming, scanning and find the main idea of the whole passage. Besides, fostering comprehension through discussion and vocabulary-building exercises.

For advanced learners, we can provide them challenging texts, including academic

articles, classic literature, or opinion pieces. Getting students involved in critical analysis by identifying themes, tone, and author intent.

3.2. Enrich students' vocabularies and extensive reading

It is a truth of that vocabularies lay a solid foundation for the cultivation of language skills. Majority of students hold the belief that vocabularies are the main obstacle in leaning to read. The lack of such vocabulary may be the greatest single impediment of fluent reading. Even students can do predicting, the situation should be that the unfamiliar words in a passage should be no more than 3%. (Wang , 2006) Huang Yuanshen (2006) once mentioned learning any language was inseparable from reading, especially a lot of reading, and that learning English was without exception.

For extensive reading, different reading tasks are designed for students at diverse levels, and teacher should encourage students to read with some questions in mind ahead. It can be carried out like this: students are asked to share their reading before class in turns, and teacher will give the sharing student one or two questions based on the content of the passage and student's proficiency. During the sharing, students should talk about how he or she obtained the answer. After that, students will have an evaluation first then teacher make the final judgment.

3.3. Apply activity-based approach

The English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (2017 edition) issued by the Ministry of Education in 2017 officially introduced the concept of English learning activities in China. The "activity view of English learning" emphasizes teaching content that integrates the six elements of the curriculum and focuses on developing students' language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability as the ultimate goal. This approach is considered an effective and important way to achieve the goals of English subject education. Therefore, it is essential for English teachers to comprehensively apply the "view of English learning activities," ensuring that learning activities are student-centered and facilitate knowledge comprehension and language organization through practical activities. Additionally, innovative activities should be used to guide students in applying their knowledge in real contexts.

Generally speaking, there are altogether three stages of activity-based approach moving from lower level to higher level, which are learning and understanding, applying and practicing, transferring and innovating. It should be noted that these three factors are not in a linear relationship but interacted with each other. That is to say, in one teaching task, it is hard to say the task just focusing on one aspect of activity-based approach.

3.4. Enhance reading skills

If we want to help students become capable of reading, we should first cultivate a amount of teachers being quite clear about how to do reading. Only when they have a ready-formed plan can they teach students strategically, and students can absorb and apply these skills from consciously to deftly.

In order to achieve this objective, For teachers, govern-ment and schools would better provide teachers as many opportunities as possible to enrich their theoretical and practical perceptions towards how to do reading, like teaching and research activities inside and outside the school.

We can first encourage students to have a discussion about how do they do the reading task, if it is useful, teachers can invite some excellent students to share their reading skills in class. After that, teachers can position as a friend to share other feasible reading skills through demonstration and typical case explanation. For instance, there are various types of reading text, every text owns its ' own feature, we can guide student have a deep analyze in one typical essay, then students are able to handle the similar kind of text, also students' confidence toward reading will increase signifi-cantly.

What is more, it is also crucial for teachers to give a formal instruction as how to become a proficient reader, how we can get the main idea and useful information from the passage efficiently. Teacher are supposed to function them-selves as a facilitator to students' reading and gradually withdraw their willingness to help so that students will be-come autonomous learners step by step.

3.5 Foster critical thinking

Every text owns its own logic. There are different types of text, as narration, argumentation, expository writing, fic-tion and theaters, sometimes we tends to use different tech-niques when the text type varies, so teachers can help stu-dents build such logic patterns and it would be easier to solve the similar text in the future.

Then reading comprehension possesses its inner logic. For instance, the transitions and conjunctions: If students fail to understand the meaning of one word, they can make the best use of context to predict, and the predication can be based on transitions as "but, however", we can know the meaning may be opposite from the original. Also, looking the reading questions before reading a passage plays a essential part in our reading, through commonly used key words we can get the main idea which may help us get a better under-standing of the passage, and teachers can show students how this kind of technique works.

Furthermore, students find it dull to focus on just one reading task, teachers can organize more in-depth analysis of the passage, such as the writers ' intentions and other top-ics to sublimate the theme, the task can make students feel it is somewhat challenging but accessible.

3.6. Carry out diversified activities

First, establish a support study group and two students as a group. Those who obtain higher grades assist those get lower grades. Asking teachers facing to facing is kind of threatening for them, so this approach is applicable. Also, we can add some reading test competition to review the reading skills.

Second, hold book sharing sessions. Students need to have some chances to practice what they have learned, as the saying goes "Practice makes the perfect." In addition, it is not to say students must follow the reading skills formally, they can have their own preferences but the skills taught can provide them some hints to do reading more fluently. In order to achieve this, enough practices are required.

Finally, establishing reading comprehension competitions. After reading the academic article in a limited time, students draw a knowledge framework map, including key words, main arguments, and their connections. Its' objectives are to consolidate their understanding and application.

3.7. Use the Internet to help

In the fast-paced, globally linked world of the twenty-first century, technology has emerged as a crucial tool for transforming a number of aspects of our lives, including education. Particularly in terms of enhancing the acquisition and mastery of the English language, technology has substantially enhanced language learning and teaching (Ahmadi, 2018).

For now, there are many kinds of technical tool available for us, the general process of reading can involve some of these.

Mobile applications created for language learning have been becoming more and more popular. These apps boost the fun and motivation of language learning by offering learning experiences with gaming features, consistent practice sessions, and quick feedback. With the use of technology, students may engage with a variety of multimedia content, including podcasts, films, and online publications (Yang, 2023).

4. Conclusion

To sum up, reading plays a pivotal role in the English teaching class, and teachers and schools should try to compensate the drawbacks and carry out some reasonable measures to improve the reading qualities.

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