FACILITATING EFFECTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL READING : THE TEACHER'S VITAL ROLE

Dr. Divya C.
Assistant Professor of English, Dr. N.G.P Arts and
Science College (Autonomous), Coimbatore

ABSTRACT

Reading holds the power to bring joy and enlightenment, unveiling the unknown and serving as a vital cognitive activity in today's information-driven society. As such, it is crucial for students to develop effective reading skills to participate fully in today's educated world. The act of reading not only liberates individuals from ignorance and superstition but also has the potential to reshape their thinking and lifestyle. Encouraging a culture of critical reading is essential for educators, as it goes beyond surface-level comprehension to analyze assumptions, inferences, and conclusions made by writers. Critical readers develop well-rounded skills applicable to various areas, including SQ3R techniques, multimedia utilization, browsing, and scanning by evaluating the accuracy, reliability, quality, and value of written content. While multiple approaches to fostering literacy exist, certain factors significantly impact its acquisition. Teachers play a pivotal role in overcoming these obstacles and ensuring that reading becomes accessible, effective, and successful for their students. Acting as the primary resource, teachers provide guidance, encouragement, and instruction, helping students develop their reading approaches. They introduce beginning readers to phonics, aiding in the correct pronunciation of letters and words, while also emphasizing proficient writing in early grades, as it directly correlates with reading skills. Additionally, teachers assist students in recognizing syllables and selecting appropriate reading materials based on age, time, and ability, acknowledging their responsibility in motivating and engaging students to become enthusiastic readers. Key elements in this process include critical reading, skimming and scanning techniques, SQ3R strategies, and the effective utilization of multimedia resources.

INTRODUCTION

In our ever more interconnected world, the act of reading has become a crucial and intricate mental activity. It plays an essential role in our society, where knowledge is increasingly globalized. For today's students to thrive and actively participate in our literate society, they must possess effective reading skills. A reader wields the power to enlighten others through their understanding of written material. However, to fully engage in the reading process, one's mind must be free from internal and external distractions. True reading occurs when the reader can accurately perceive the words on the page, comprehend both their literal and figurative meanings, react to them, and assimilate the information they convey. In this process, perception and comprehension are two foundational elements, with perception being a mechanical aspect and comprehension involving cognitive abilities.

Understanding the Process of Actual Reading:

The primary goal of reading goes beyond the mere act of reading itself; it involves unraveling the meaning conveyed by words, phrases, and sentences. Crystal (1987: 210) suggests that

reading is intricately connected to sound, as both oral and silent readers often engage in sub-vocal mechanisms such as moving their lips or using their tongue. The visual symbols they perceive are transformed into auditory representations. The early stages of reading hold particular significance as students progress from decoding simple words to comprehending more complex linguistic elements like phrases and paragraphs. It is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that beginners maintain their passion for reading, as losing interest can hinder comprehension and create a reluctance to read in the future. However, when students develop a positive attitude towards reading, they can excel in language acquisition and become proficient readers. Therefore, teachers must be attentive and supportive during this stage to guide students on the right path. In later stages, students can be exposed to various forms of reading to enhance their reading abilities.

Different Types of Reading:
Reading can be classified into three distinct types: extensive reading, intensive reading, and oral reading. Extensive reading is an effective approach for students to enhance their reading skills by immersing themselves in a wide range of comprehensible materials. Intensive reading, on the other hand, focuses on acquiring reading skills within an educational environment. Students encounter diverse materials and engage in activities that deepen their understanding of the provided passages. Intensive reading is primarily instructional in nature.

Extensive Reading:
The primary objective of extensive reading is not focused solely on language development. Instead, it aims to gather information from the reading material. When engaging in extensive reading, the reader seeks to comprehend the overall meaning or idea conveyed by the passage. This type of reading is often referred to as "reading for content." Teachers can assist students in acquiring skills to locate, evaluate, organize, and retain information from what they read. The creation of an appropriate academic environment and a well-planned curriculum are crucial factors in fostering these academic skills. To promote extensive reading, students can be provided with materials that pique their interest. It is beneficial to encourage them to read aloud new materials, such as magazines, periodicals, and daily newspapers. Establishing reading clubs in schools can also provide students with diverse reading opportunities. The success of extensive reading largely depends on the student's initiative and positive attitude towards reading. By cultivating a mindful reading habit, students can enhance their proficiency in English across all language skills, including speaking, listening, and writing.

Oral Reading:
In order for students to establish a connection between spoken words and their written counterparts, oral reading is an important tool. It plays a crucial role in the development of a student's verbal communication skills by requiring him or her to read aloud with accurate intonation and pronunciation in order to develop their verbal communication skills. The function of oral reading is to serve as a fundamental step towards the development of silent reading, which is considered to be one of the most important aspects of well-developed reading

abilities. The ability to read fluently is closely related to the ability to comprehend what you are reading. It is suggested by Fuchs et al. (2001) that fluent reading is characterized by efficient word recognition, allowing the brain to allocate cognitive resources towards higher-level reading skills, such as comprehension, when the reader is fluent. Coyne and Simmons (2001) highlight that literacy fluency reflects the intricate coordination of both lower-level and higher-level processes. Researchers view fluency as a reliable indicator of overall literacy. Readers who struggle with decoding words excessively may find themselves consumed with the mechanical aspects of reading, making it difficult for them to focus on the meaning conveyed by the words in the text.

Intensive Reading:

Intensive reading refers to a meticulous and thorough examination of a subject. During intensive reading, readers may encounter unfamiliar vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and underlying ideas within the text. This is commonly known as "reading comprehension" or "critical reading."

Critical Reading:

In regard to reading, the phrase "critical" refers to an objective appraisal that includes examining both strengths and flaws. It requires being discerning and discriminating while interacting with textual information. Reading the surface text, reading between the lines, and reading beyond the stated information are all examples of critical reading. Successful reading necessitates critical thinking and active learning. According to Alfassi (2004), students should not only understand the material but also critically analyze its content, retain the knowledge, and apply it in a flexible manner. Critical reading goes beyond surface-level comprehension; it entails delving into deeper meanings and investigating latent signals. Critical reading, according to Ahuja and Ahuja (1995: 103), necessitates interpretation, attentiveness, and ingenuity. Critical reading abilities enable pupils to make educated judgments and decisions based on the content they encounter. Critical reading and critical thinking are inextricably linked. Reading and thinking are not the same thing; thinking includes generalizations, conclusions, and applications. Critical reading is similar to the work of an expert detective. Teachers play a significant role in preparing students for critical reading by encouraging them to examine the author's assumptions, inferences, and conclusions. Students learn to evaluate the content's correctness, dependability, quality, and worth using established criteria or standards gained from their previous experiences. Teachers should help students comprehend how authors use meaning, tone, phrasing, and style in their writing.

Active Reading:

Reading is an inherently active process; passive reading, where the eyes are still and the mind is idle, is impossible. Active reading leads to improved performance. The success of a reader is determined by the extent to which they grasp the writer's intended message (Adler and Doren, 1972: 7). When reading, students engage in more than simply decoding words and extracting their meanings. They strive to reconstruct the author's intended

meaning. Similarly, when writing, students go beyond mere wordplay and construct meaning based on their experiences, language knowledge, content understanding, and text features, ensuring that potential readers can readily comprehend the message (Stewart-Dore, 1988: 9).

Speed-Reading:

Speed reading goes beyond the notion of simply reading quickly; it involves reading at a pace that aligns with the material being read. Reading too slowly can lead to wandering thoughts, boredom, and forgetfulness. On the other hand, reading too quickly diminishes the chances of retaining information and can lead to frustration, stress, and reduced comprehension. The ability to read flexibly allows students to increase their reading speed while retaining more information. When reading, students should be able to transform groups of words into ideas, mental images, thoughts, emotions, and actions. The goal of reading is to grasp the overall message conveyed by the passage, rather than understanding every individual word. Reading quickly, particularly when accustomed to reading more than one line at a time, may initially cause confusion as words may be encountered in a different order than intended. However, when readers fixate their eyes, their brains can still derive meaning from the sentence regardless of the word order.

Reading Comprehension:

Questions that begin with "what," "where," "who," and "when" are usually easier for students to answer, while intellectual questions starting with "how" and "why" can pose more challenges. Reading comprehension is not solely about absorbing words on a page; it entails understanding what is read.

Techniques for Better Comprehension:

Introducing the SQ3R technique (Survey, Question, Read, Recall, and Review) can enhance students' understanding. Surveying involves quickly previewing the material, while active reading entails engaging with the content by highlighting important passages or adding annotations. After reading, students should briefly review the material to fill in any gaps or make corrections.

Skimming and Scanning:

It's important to differentiate between skimming and scanning. Scanning involves searching for specific information and stopping once it is found. Skimming, on the other hand, is used to get a general impression of the text and to gain an overall understanding. Skimming is not a hit-or-miss approach; it is a deliberate reading technique. When skimming, readers consciously look for specific elements on the page. Before diving into the material, readers should mentally detach themselves and take note of typographical features such as titles, headings, subdivisions, italics, and boldface, as these aid in expediting the reading process (Leedy, 1956: 181).

Influential Factors in Reading:

Reading can be influenced by various factors. Teachers need to be mindful of these obstacles in order to facilitate easy and successful reading for their students.

Effects of Head Movement: The repetitive muscle activity involved in reading can lead to fatigue and cause frequent head movements, potentially resulting in neck discomfort. Therefore, it is important for students to maintain a proper reading posture.

Drawbacks of Finger-pointing: Instructing children to use their fingers to point at every single word can not only slow down their reading speed but also negatively impact their reading habits. Hence, teachers should encourage students to refrain from using this method while reading.

Flexibility in Reading Speed: Students should be taught to adjust their reading speed based on the task at hand. They can read faster when skimming or reading extensively, and slow down when engaging in detailed scanning. Reading should not be a monotonous process.

Regression: Teachers should avoid encouraging children to excessively analyze every word's origin, structure, synonyms, antonyms, prefixes, suffixes, or various types of vocabulary. While such knowledge is not essential for developing a strong command of the language, it can divert and hinder readers from the main content.

Challenges with Vocabulary: When students encounter unfamiliar words, they may get stuck. While referring to a dictionary is an option, it can disrupt the flow of reading and cause a loss of overall comprehension. Instead, students can note down the new words and look them up after finishing the reading.

Importance of Vocabulary Acquisition: Developing a large vocabulary enhances a reader's ability to comprehend text thoroughly. Teachers can encourage students to practice learning at least five new words every day, leading to a gradual expansion of their vocabulary.

Reading beyond Word-for-Word: Reading word-for-word can hinder the understanding of the text and distort its meaning. It is crucial for children to train themselves to grasp entire phrases or meaningful groups of words within their field of vision. Otherwise, comprehension can become challenging.

Visual Efficiency: Clear eyesight is essential for effective reading. Poor eyesight can lead to regressive eye movements, impeding reading progress. Teachers should assess the vision of slow or struggling readers and recommend appropriate treatment if visual impairments are detected.

Hearing Skills: Proficient readers possess strong auditory acuity and awareness. Students with good auditory abilities tend to read well. Therefore, it is important for teachers to identify students with hearing difficulties and suggest suitable interventions at an early stage.

Environmental Factors

Speech Impediments: Speech deficiencies, which can be a motor coordination issue, are commonly associated with reading inefficiency. There is a close relationship between speaking and reading abilities. Poor articulation can directly impact reading comprehension by causing confusion between the sounds of words and their written counterparts. Therefore, teachers

should assess their students' articulation and ensure they speak words correctly. If any difficulties are identified, appropriate instruction should be provided.

Optimal Lighting: Sufficient lighting is crucial for the reader's eyes. The reading material should have appropriate quantitative and qualitative lighting to ensure clear visibility of the written characters. Quantitative lighting refers to the right amount of light for comfortable vision, while qualitative lighting pertains to the distribution and brightness of light in the reading environment. Adequate lighting and proper illumination significantly contribute to efficient reading performance, as stated by Broom (1942: 31). Insufficient lighting can strain the eyes, resulting in blurred and hazy vision. Conversely, excessive light on the reading surface can cause glare and lead to fatigue.

External Factors Affecting Readability

Several factors influence the external readability of printed materials. A legible page layout can affect vision and cause visual discomfort and fatigue. Considerations such as font size and type, length of printed lines, paper and ink quality, use of images, color implementation, and presence or absence of page embellishments are all significant. Teachers should take these factors into account and assess the readability of materials before distributing them to students.

Internal Readability:

The internal readability of reading materials, as determined by comprehension levels, significantly impacts an individual's reading efficiency. Teachers play a vital role in selecting instructional materials that appropriately challenge students, fostering their reading skills, and ensuring future academic success. These materials can be categorized into three levels: independent, instructional, and frustrating.

In supervised instruction, researchers like Ahuja and Ahuja (1995: 44) have found that students should be able to answer at least 75 percent of the questions related to the materials to consider them suitable for instructional purposes. For independent study, students should aim to answer around 90 percent of the questions correctly. If the reader's comprehension rate falls below 50 percent, the reading material is deemed frustrating.

These three levels hold immense importance for teachers, as emphasized by Johnson and Kress (1971: 4). It is crucial to assess the level of material that a student can effectively handle when working independently. Providing materials that align with the appropriate level is essential for students to perform well in independent work and establish high standards of achievement. Avid readers experience pleasure and satisfaction when the reading materials match their maximum comprehension level.

Interest also plays a vital role in internal motivation and cultivating a reading habit among students. The reader's interest can be influenced by informative, aesthetic, and recreational reading materials. Cummins and Fagins (1954: 49-58) suggest that interest emerges from an emotional involvement, where individuals develop preferences or aversions towards specific subjects. Interests are shaped by the interaction between one's basic needs and the means employed to fulfill them.

Promoting Purposeful Reading:

When initiating a reading activity, teachers should encourage students to engage in purposeful reading. It is important for students to understand what they are going to read and why they are reading it. This approach can eventually lead to individualized reading. According to Ediger (2007), the purpose of reading should be emphasized throughout each lesson or unit of study. Various forms of individualized reading can be implemented, such as allowing students to take library books home, share interesting findings during school sharing time, or choose their own books for sustained silent reading. These practices enable students to enjoy reading, and refine their skills and can be complemented by extended evaluation sessions to assess their comprehension, word recognition skills, and reading fluency progress.

Encouraging Student Engagement as Readers:

To comprehend and enjoy reading, students must actively engage with texts. Encouraging all students to become readers requires fostering creative attitudes and literate behavior, as stated by Malin (2010). Engaged readers need to decode, comprehend, and interact with the text to construct meaning and reflect on the reading experience. In contrast, non-engaged readers often struggle to reflect on their reading due to a lack of interest, poor reading skills, limited comprehension strategies, or insufficient personal experiences to draw upon for meaning construction.

The ability to visualize while reading plays a crucial role in constructing meaning, as suggested by Jacob (1976) and Eisner (1976). Engaged readers possess the capacity to use mental imagery, enhancing comprehension, engagement, and response. Encouraging non-engaged readers to immerse themselves in the story world and develop their ability to imagine can help transform them into engaged readers, as proposed by Enciso (1990).

Enhancing Reading Skills through Multimedia

Multimedia provides opportunities for students to independently enhance their reading skills through various activities. Driscoll (2008: 4-5) highlights the benefits of skimming and scanning, which can be effectively practiced using websites. Computers and technology play a significant role in facilitating reading instruction, with diverse programs and software available to guide students. Marlow Edger suggests numerous ways of utilizing personal computers to teach reading skills (Sharma & Sharma, 2006: 153). Software packages offer drills and practice exercises to support students in overcoming reading difficulties.

Reading goes beyond simply decoding symbols into sounds; it involves comprehension and critical thinking. Multimedia options help students develop both decoding and comprehension skills (Cooper, 2008: 192). For example, students can choose to read a library book accompanied by a cassette or CD-ROM that features a recorded voice corresponding to the printed words. By following along in their chosen book as the recorded voice plays, students can increase their sight word recognition and reading skills while comprehending the content. The recorded voice aids in understanding ideas that might be challenging without it, and it also helps address individualized reading difficulties. Teachers can utilize rich audiovisual aids, PowerPoint slides, and snapshots to conduct phonemic drills and engage students in reading.

Utilizing Newspapers in Reading Instruction:

Newspapers offer valuable resources for educators and can be effectively incorporated into reading instruction to enhance students' language skills. They serve as versatile teaching materials that cater to various proficiency levels, ranging from elementary to advanced. Teachers can leverage newspapers in different ways, either by interpreting the content or utilizing the newspapers as they are. Some newspapers are specifically designed to be reader-friendly and adaptable for instructional purposes.

Dedicated instructors may use newspapers to construct exercises and activities that encourage reading comprehension, critical thinking, writing, grammar, vocabulary growth, map/chart reading, geography, social studies, and more. However, given the large quantity of information accessible in newspapers, teachers must carefully organize these exercises. Depending on the nature of the activity and the sorts of questions presented, newspapers can be especially suited for mixed-ability students.

When planning a lesson that involves newspapers, teachers should take into account factors such as article length, paragraph structure, language complexity, information density, subject matter, available time, and students' proficiency levels. By fostering reading habits through newspaper-based instruction, students can enhance their understanding of diction, pronunciation, idiomatic phrases, sentence structures, and vocabulary.

The Digital Era and Newspaper Access

In the age of rapid technological advancements in mass communication, the internet has become a primary source of newspapers and magazines for language teachers. Through online platforms, students can access thousands of newspapers and magazines from around the world. However, teachers must exercise caution when selecting appropriate newspaper materials for their students (Tafani, 2009).

CONCLUSION

Reading skills are integral to all curriculum areas and essential for language learning. Teachers play a vital role in cultivating students' reading habits, and their guidance and encouragement significantly contribute to achieving this goal. Teachers should possess the competence to effectively teach pronunciation, expand vocabulary, develop fluency, and ensure accuracy. Special attention should be given to selecting age-appropriate reading materials and determining students' reading levels based on their abilities and available time. Teachers should emphasize the importance of dedicating time to reading, both in the school or college library and at home, at least three times a week.

Reading not only provides enjoyment but also enlightens individuals. It nurtures a curiosity to learn more and encourages critical and creative thinking. As reading unlocks the realm of the unknown, it is crucial for every teacher to emphasize its significance.

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