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Some useful strategies in teaching reading

В статье рассматриваются методические приемы обучения чтению на иностранном языке.

Ключевые слова: чтение, методика, иностранный язык

The author analyzes the teaching methods of teaching reading in a foreign language.

Keywords: reading, methodology, foreign language

There are many reasons why getting students to read English texts is an important part of the teacher's job. In the first place, many of them 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 is useful for other purposes too: any exposure to English (provided students understand it more or less) is a good thing for language students. At the very least, some of the language sticks in their minds as part of the process of language acquisition, and if the reading text is especially interesting and engaging, acquisition is likely to be even more successful.

Reading texts also provide good models for English writing. When we teach the skill of writing, we will need to show students models of what we are encouraging them to do. Reading texts also provide opportunities to study language: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and the way we construct sentences, paragraphs and texts. Lastly, good reading texts can introduce interesting topics, stimulate discussion, excite imaginative responses and be the springboard for well-rounded, fascinating lessons.

Strategies for reading comprehension. For most second language learners who are already literate in a previous language, reading comprehension is primarily a matter of developing appropriate, efficient comprehension strategies. Some strategies are related to bottom-up procedures, and others enhance the top-down processes. Following are ten such strategies, each of which can be practically applied to your classroom techniques.

1. Identify the purpose in reading

How many times have you been told to read something yet you don't know why you're being asked to read it? You did only a mediocre job of retaining what

you "read" and perhaps were rather slow in the process. Efficient reading consists of clearly identifying the purpose in reading something. By doing so, you know what you're looking for and can weed out potential distracting information. Whenever you are teaching a reading technique, make sure students know their purpose in reading something.

2. Use efficient silent reading techniques for relatively rapid comprehension

If you are teaching beginning level students, this particular strategy will not apply, because they are still struggling with the control of a limited vocabulary and grammatical patterns. Your intermediate-to-advanced level students need not be speed readers, but you can help them increase efficiency by teaching a few silent reading rules:

- You don't need to "pronounce" each word to yourself.
- Try to visually perceive more than one word at a time, preferably phrases.
- Unless a word is absolutely crucial to global understanding skip over it and try to infer its meaning from its context.

Aside from these fundamental guidelines, which it followed can help learners to be efficient readers; reading speed is usually not much of an issue for all but the most advanced learners. Academic reading, for example is something most learners manage to accomplish by allocating whatever time they personally need in order to complete the material. If your students can read 250 to 300 words per minute, further concern over speed may not be necessary.

3. Skim the text for main ideas

Perhaps the two most valuable reading strategies for learners (as well as native speakers) are skimming and scanning. Skimming consists of quickly running one's eyes across a whole text (such as an essay, article, or chapter) for its gist. Skimming gives readers the advantage of being able to predict the purpose of the passage, the main topic, or message, and possibly some of the developing or supporting ideas. This gives them a head start as they embark on more focused reading. You can train students to skim passages by giving them, say, thirty seconds to look through a few pages of material, close their books and then tell you what they learned.

4. Scan the text for specific information

The second in the most valuable category is scanning, or quickly searching for some particular piece or pieces of information in a text. Scanning exercises may ask students to look for names or dates, to find a definition of a key concept, or to list a certain number of supporting details. The purpose of scanning is to extract specific information without reading through the whole text. For academic

English, scanning is absolutely essential. In vocational or general English, scanning is important in dealing with genres like schedules, manuals, forms, etc.

5. Use semantic mapping or clustering

Readers can easily be overwhelmed by a long string of ideas or events. The strategy of semantic mapping, or grouping ideas into meaningful clusters, helps reader to provide some order to the chaos. Making such semantic maps can be done individually, but they make for productive group work technique as students collectively induce order and hierarchy to a passage. Early drafts of these maps can be quite messy- which is perfectly acceptable.

6. Guess when you aren't certain

This is an extremely broad category. Learners can use guessing to their advantage to

- guess the meaning of a word
- guess grammatical relationship (e.g. a pronoun reference)
- guess a discourse relationship
- infer implied meaning ("between the lines")
- guess about a cultural reference
- guess content messages

Now, you of course don't want to encourage you learners to become haphazard readers! They should utilize all their skills and put forth as much effort as possible to be on target with their hypotheses. But the point here is that reading is, after all, a guessing game of sorts, and the sooner learners understand this game, the better off they are. The key to successful guessing is to make it reasonably accurate.

You can help learners to become accurate guessers by encouraging them to use effective compensation strategies in which they fill gaps in their competence by intelligent attempts to use whatever clues are available to them. Language-based clues include word analysis, word associations, and textual structure. Non-linguistic clues come from context, situation, and other schemata.

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