



STAGES OF CONDUCTING READING AND READING ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

Reading is the foundation on which academic skills of an individual are built. The art of reading is mainly a matter of concentrating on the import of the written words, and not on the words themselves. Words are merely the medium whereby the message of the writer is conveyed to the reader.

A student is said to have acquired correct reading habits when he can focus his attention on the message and not on the form; when he treats the text as a familiar form of discourse and not as a task in a deciphering.

Reading offers more than access to new information that can be quantitatively added to what we know already; it can also lead to a qualitative restructuring and re-evaluation of what we know. If we are prepared to imaginatively follow the invitation of a writer to see things from his or her point of view that may add new qualities to our experience of the world. This is why reading does not only widen the horizon but can also change it and enrich our ability to understand the people and world around us.

It was difficult to arrive at this stage under the old translation method which concentrated on the single word and made the learner conscious of its association with the corresponding word in the mother-tongue. Reading by word-concentration is a pernicious method corresponding to typing

with one finger; it can by practice lead to a certain proficiency, but not to the required skills.

Training technique. There appear to be two groups of opinion on the technique to be adopted for the training of the student. One favors silent reading from the outset, the other oral reading.

Silent reading. The case for silent reading as both an end and a means might be stated as follows:

This is modern reaction from the traditional form of language lesson in which oral reading predominated.

Oral reading on traditional lines virtually converted a collective lesson into a series of short individual lessons.

Silent reading is claimed to be eye- as opposed to lip-reading. The eye movements are rapid and can skip across the written pages by concentrating on key words.

Silent reading keeps the whole class active and enables the teacher to assist the weaker students.



It enables the students to work at their respective paces and thus solves the difficulties of extreme types.

The practice of silent reading in class prepares the students for library on their own.

It introduces the students to the art of skimming.

Oral reading is a specific skill which it is not essential for all the students to acquire.

Oral reading. The arguments in favor of oral reading are:

Reading aloud is a form of speech prompted by written symbols; it is an aid to speech fluency, correct pronunciation and intonation.

If correct silent reading implies the application of a particular technique (eye movements over word-groups) the children must first be shown how to achieve it by example.

The words on the printed page are inert symbols which come to life when read out by a good reader. The teacher's reading of a text is too valuable to be dispensed with.

As vocabulary is an important consideration, it ought to be presented to the ear as well as to the eye.

Concentrated reading (in the early stage) is an alternative means of achieving general activity.

Silent reading may be carried on at home, but the classroom is the only place for controlled oral reading.

Oral reading provides a means of testing comprehension and checks superficial study resulting from attention to content and not to details.

Intensive reading is more important than extensive reading in the early stages and for the greater part of the course, indeed. "Skimming" is not a desirable habit, particularly for students.

Progressive stages. As reading is a skill for which the students must be trained, it is

advisable to proceed in series of progressive stages with each serving as preparation for the next. The ultimate aim is free reading by learner unaided by the teacher but with the occasional aid of the dictionary. The end, however, need not also be the means; the early stages may have objectives of their own differing from that of the ultimate aim.

There is a tendency to regard writing as synonymous with written composition, and proficiency in this skill as ability to discuss any topic in writing.

In the foreign-language course, however, the writing skill must be interpreted more broadly as the ability to represent words by means of written symbols.

Intensive reading is a mode of reading in which readers focus on a fairly comprehensive understanding of a given text. There is, of course, a difference between reading fictional or non-fictional texts. The first generally allows more freedom of imagination than the second. Note, however, that for both types of reading processes it is true that a reader's understanding of a text can be divorced from his pre-knowledge, age, and purpose of reading. Each of these factors contributes to the construction of the meaning and may lead to partially different interpretations of the given text. All reading for understanding requires the interaction of two types of cognitive processes, namely top-down processes and bottom-up processes in the construction of meaning.

Top-down processes start from the reader's general knowledge of the world and the given topic. They activate a reader's contextual knowledge which is then used for interpreting the information coming in "bottom up". Top-down processes may be triggered by, for example, the title/ topic of a specific text and what the reader knows about that already. This pre-knowledge creates certain expectations which are then matched, in



bottom-up processes, against the information which comes in with each new sentence and paragraph. Understanding thus is the joint product of an anticipation of meaning and its confirmation or refutation by the literal study of the textual document.

Good readers try to be critically aware of what they contribute to the construction of meaning. When reading an essay they do two things in parallel: They first try to identify its topic, that is which questions the authors sets out to answer, and the critically compare his answers to their own understanding of the issue which may be modified by what the author has to say on it. With regard to reading

for study purposes this often means that it is no use complaining that the author does not focus on what the reader is presently interested in or would have wished the author to focus on.

The easiest way of making the text big and therefore something students have to physically move around is to project it onto the board. You can then play games like asking pairs of students to race to underline the answer to the question you shout out. The questions can also be held up on a piece of card or revealed at the top of the board rather than shouted out.

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