

DEVELOPING PROFICIENT READING SKILLS THROUGH STRATEGIC INSTRUCTION AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Kumush Kosimova Golib kizi

EFL teacher at Chirchik State Pedagogical University

kumushjumanova99@gmail.com

+998994631999

Abstract: Reading is not just a basic academic skill but a foundational element of lifelong learning and personal growth. Despite its significance, many underestimate the complexity of the reading process, assuming it to be an automatic or simple task. This article examines the cognitive and instructional dimensions of reading, with a focus on enhancing comprehension through effective strategies. Drawing on research and classroom-based practices, it outlines key approaches such as prediction, visualization, questioning, and inference to promote deeper textual engagement. The article also highlights the importance of early exposure to language and the role of teachers in developing critical reading habits.

Keywords: reading strategies, reading competency, classroom-based practices, mental activities, high-level literacy.

Introduction

Reading is a core competency essential not only for success in English but across all subjects. A strong reading foundation boosts academic performance and significantly contributes to a learner's cognitive development. However, the process of reading is often oversimplified. Many people view reading as simply decoding words, but in reality, it involves complex mental activities such as interpreting meaning, making inferences, and critically analyzing content.

In the words of Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985), reading is a “fundamental life skill” that plays a critical role in academic success and personal fulfillment. Without strong reading skills, students may struggle not only in school but also in their professional and personal lives. In our increasingly digital and information-driven society, high-level literacy is more crucial than ever before.

The Complex Nature of Reading

To develop strong reading abilities, learners must understand that reading is more than recognizing words; it is about constructing meaning. Deep comprehension requires readers to go beyond surface-level understanding and engage with the author's purpose, language use, and underlying messages. Teele (2004) emphasizes that the ultimate goal of reading is comprehension at multiple levels, which includes literal, inferential, and critical understanding.

Active readers don't passively absorb information; they interact with the text, applying a variety of cognitive strategies to enhance their comprehension. These strategies must be explicitly taught and practiced in the classroom.

Key Reading Comprehension Strategies

1. Predicting

Prediction sets a purpose for reading and keeps students actively engaged. Readers use prior knowledge to anticipate content, and as they continue reading, they revise their predictions based on new information. This cognitive interaction creates a dynamic reading experience that boosts comprehension.

2. Visualization

By creating mental images of characters, settings, and events, students can transform abstract text into concrete understanding. Visualization helps students grasp complex ideas and enhances their memory of the text. Teachers can encourage visualization through drawing, verbal descriptions, or guided imagery activities.

3. Making Connections

Connecting new information to personal experiences (text-to-self), other texts (text-to-text), or broader contexts (text-to-world) enriches the reading experience. These connections make reading more meaningful and foster critical thinking by encouraging comparisons and contrasts.

4. Summarizing

Summarization strengthens comprehension by requiring students to distill main ideas and discard irrelevant details. This process reinforces understanding and supports the development of concise, structured thinking. Summarizing also aids in content retention and test preparation.

5. Questioning

Students who ask questions before, during, and after reading engage more deeply with the material. Questioning drives inquiry and reinforces understanding. Teachers can model questioning techniques and guide students to generate factual, inferential, and reflective questions that stimulate discussion and deeper analysis.

6. Inferring

Inference allows readers to uncover implied meanings and themes that are not directly stated. By using textual clues and background knowledge, students can "read between the lines" to discover the author's intent or the deeper message of the text. Inferring enhances interpretive skills and encourages a nuanced understanding of literature and informational texts.

The Role of Early Language Exposure and Core Skills

Proficient readers often have a strong foundation in phonemic awareness and language recognition from early childhood. Activities such as singing songs, reading rhymes, and playing with sounds help children develop essential links between letters

and sounds. These early experiences contribute to the development of decoding skills and, eventually, to reading fluency and comprehension.

Moreover, interpreting both literal and figurative meanings is a core skill that must be nurtured over time. Teachers should provide students with opportunities to explore language in depth, discuss metaphors and idioms, and examine how meaning shifts depending on context.

Conclusion

Reading is a multifaceted skill that demands intentional instruction and continuous practice. By explicitly teaching comprehension strategies like predicting, visualizing, questioning, and inferring, educators can empower students to become active and proficient readers. Early exposure to language, along with consistent support from teachers, lays the groundwork for literacy success. In a world where the ability to read critically is more important than ever, equipping students with these strategies ensures they are prepared for academic challenges and real-life literacy demands.

References:

1. Anderson, R. C., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J. A., & Wilkinson, I. A. G. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading*. National Institute of Education.
2. Duke, N. K., & Pearson, P. D. (2002). Effective practices for developing reading comprehension. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (3rd ed., pp. 205–242). International Reading Association.
3. Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2007). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension for understanding and engagement* (2nd ed.). Stenhouse Publishers.
4. Keene, E. O., & Zimmermann, S. (2007). *Mosaic of thought: The power of comprehension strategy instruction* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.
5. National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.
6. Teele, S. (2004). *The multiple intelligences school: A guide for developing the seven intelligences in your classroom*. Corwin Press.
7. Tompkins, G. E. (2014). *Literacy for the 21st century: A balanced approach* (6th ed.). Pearson.
8. Pressley, M., & Allington, R. L. (2014). *Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching* (4th ed.). Guilford Press.
9. Kosimova K.G., (2025). Theoretical basis of teaching and writing skills in teaching EFL. “Экономика и социум” №5(132) 2025.