

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE READING SKILL. ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO READ

Olesea BUCUCI, Lecturer

Rezumat

Capacitatea de a citi într-o limbă străină aduce multe bucurii, dar și mult „necaz”, atât pentru profesori cât și pentru studenți. În articol sunt prezentate o variație de activități de îmbunătățire a capacității și calității de citare, cât și diverși factori care influențează abilitatea studenților de a citi în limba engleză.

Reading is an important skill for English language learners in today's world. It supports the overall proficiency and provides access to crucial information at work, school or university. With English being the dominant language of the Internet, international business, and academia (including science), beginning and advanced students alike face pressures to develop their second language reading abilities.

The acquisition of reading skills, however, is never easy, and students need consistent practice to become fluent readers. Successful readers have to solve many puzzles, such as learning to recognize unfamiliar letters, words, syntax, and discourse patterns. These challenges can be overcome more easily if students are highly motivated to read. But what can teachers do to motivate students to read in English?

Some research on this subject points to successful methods and techniques, such as choosing reading topics that appeal to students, assigning material and tasks at the right level, organizing collaborative work, and offering positive feedback.

However, in their efforts to motivate students to read, teachers often do not realize that different instructional methods actually promote different types of student motivation.

Students coming to our university know very little about reading in a foreign language. That's why we have to begin with those things they know already. Little by little they come to know things better and better. When students read in English, the experience can easily become overwhelming especially when they lack vocabulary, grammar and content knowledge.

These frustrating reading experiences can result in decreased motivation to read- a truly unfortunate consequence considering the importance of reading for most of our students.

There are certain considerations which appear to influence the students' ability to read: aptitude, age, motivation and native language interference.

- **Aptitude:** It is not precisely known what governs aptitude to learn subjects in a foreign language. Having mathematical ability or possessing a musical “ear” have been proposed as possible connections to a person's inherent ability to learn different subjects in a foreign language.

- **Age:** Adults generally have a greater long-term memorizing facility than children, which gives them a greater advantage for learning. This long-term memorizing ability aids in the repetition of symbols. It also provides an organization of newly acquired language structure, enabling the students to have greater recall and understanding. Inhibition may also hinder learning. Unlike children, adults are more self-conscious and, therefore, hesitate for fear of making mistakes.

- **Motivation:** Language study can be greatly influenced by motivation. There are two types of motivation that may sustain interest in learning. These two basic types are: *extrinsic and intrinsic*.

Extrinsic motivation is typically driven by factors outside of the learner; extrinsically motivated students read to receive good grade, please the teacher, outperform their group-mates or some other reasons, but not because they find it interesting or enjoyable [3, p. 54].

Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is free from the influence of external factors such as reward or punishment. Intrinsically motivated students read because they find it interesting or enjoyable; therefore, motivation comes from inside and is self-determined. The more self-determined students' motivations are, the more likely they are to develop and sustain their learning ability. It is important to remember that some forms of extrinsic motivation are more self-determined than the others.

- **Native language interference:** The native language interference can have a great effect on the students' ability to acquire English. The student needs to write in English and most of all, to read a lot and to translate ready-made works, so that the interference of his native language won't have such a great

influence on him. It can be anticipated, but not all student errors can be attributed to this interference. Errors may also result from the inherent linguistic complexities of English.

To many second language readers, reading is a slow process; yet developing rapid reading, an essential skill for all students, is often neglected in the classroom. Readers who do not understand often slow down their reading rates and then do not enjoy reading because it takes so much time. As a result, they do not read much, and so continues the vicious cycle.

By reading faster the reader is encouraged to read more, and with more reading, comprehension improves. This suggests that the more students read, the more they increase their reading abilities. So that, readers who are reading well and who have good vocabularies will read more, learn more meanings, and hence read better.

Readers with inadequate vocabularies, who read slowly and without enjoyment, read less. As a result, they have slower development of vocabulary knowledge, which in turn inhibits further growth in reading ability. Thus, the more exposure a student has to language through reading, the greater possibilities that overall language proficiency will increase. By increasing reading rates, second language readers are exposed to much more language than if they read at a slower, more laborious rate.

The four reading- rate activities can be used in the second language reading class to increase student reading rates. These activities are based on reading- rate development theories and practice in first and second language reading [2, p. 12].

The activities do not require specially developed texts or equipment and therefore can be implemented by classroom teachers using class texts or materials. Furthermore, the activities are short and can fill small units of time.

A major benefit of these activities is that they make the reader aware of the importance of reading rates- not at the expense of reading comprehension but in conjunction with comprehension. Students find these activities worthwhile and see measurable progress in their reading rates as a result of these activities [1, p. 34].

- **Rate - buildup reading.** In this activity students have 60 seconds to read as much material as they can. They are given an additional 60 seconds to read again from the beginning of the text. The purpose of this activity is to reread “old” material quickly, gliding into “new”. As students participate in this rate building activity, they learn that indeed they can increase their reading rates.

- **Repeated reading.** The repeated reading activity develops reading rates as students read a short passage over and over again until they receive criterion levels of reading speed and comprehension. As learners do repeated reading exercises, they come to realize how this activity can improve their reading comprehension.

- **Class - paced reading.** The class- paced reading activity allows the class to set a goal for a minimal reading rate. Once the class establishes the goal, students calculate the average number of words per page of the material being read and determine how many pages need to be read in one minute in order to achieve the class goal.

Building these activities into an existing reading class can increase the reading rates of our learners. This will allow readers to read more with greater understanding, thereby leading to increased language proficiency.

With each and every year, students experience a greater need for improved English reading abilities. To respond to these needs, we teachers need to reconsider our reading pedagogy and move beyond traditional approaches that focus on vocabulary, grammar and text structure. Strengthening and maintaining student motivation are crucial to reading instruction because reading in a foreign language takes a lot of time, effort and perseverance.

As teachers, we need to be aware of the links between motivational approaches and reading development; we need to nurture student motivational orientations that are most likely to yield positive results.

Bibliography

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