



METHODS OF IMPROVING READING SKILLS IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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Annotation. *This article is written about some common reading skills and put forwards some suggestions for the further improvement of English learners from personal experience, which may help to improve the learners' reading competence.*

Keywords. *Reading ability, skimming, scanning, extensive reading, intensive reading, vocabulary, word-building patterns, critical thinking, background knowledge, grammatical ability, good reading habits.*

Generally speaking, reading is about understanding written texts. But understanding is not simple looking. It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought. It consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to the spoken language. Comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text.

One of the most obvious, but often unnoticed facts about reading is that there are different types of reading skills. They mainly include skimming, scanning, extensive and intensive reading:

1. **Skimming** means reading rapidly for the main idea. Also called getting the “gist” of the text, skimming is a reading technique where you can glance over the material to find what you are looking for. This is best used when you already know the general idea of the text. You can also skim material before going for further reading. Getting a first glance of how a chapter or article is laid out, for example, will help you to know where to look for key information on the second read. Skimming can save you a lot of time by making you aware of the key points without fully comprehending the entire text. It will also save you time if you need to re-read the material more in-depth at a later time.

2. **Scanning** is to read rapidly to find a specific piece of information. Scanning is similar to skimming in approach. It also involves going through a chunk of text quickly without any care for comprehension. The difference between skimming and scanning is on purpose. While skimming is done to get the main idea of the whole material, scanning is done to find specific information in the material. Scanning is a reading technique that you'll find useful in many situations. One of such situations is reviewing a reading material to revive understanding of what was read. In reviewing, you move your eyes quickly over the text, searching for keywords or keyphrases that'll refresh your memory.

3. **Extensive reading** is an approach to language learning in which long text and a large amount of material are read by the students for general understanding. For extensive reading, the readers look for easy, interesting and amusing books, so as to improve their reading fluency and speed as well. The text is comparatively simple, containing a few unfamiliar words. The individual can select the book or material of his choice, on the topic



that matches their interest. Further, there is no follow-up discussion to be held in the class for what the students have learnt during their reading.

Extensive Reading is just to encourage the habit of reading in students for pleasure and make them a voracious reader. Hence, it does not really matter as to whether the reader understands each word written in the text or not, to get the basic concept of the passage.

4. **Intensive reading** is a reading method wherein learners are supposed to read the short text carefully and deeply so as to gain maximum understanding. Basically, it is the in-depth reading of a comparatively shorter piece of reading material, to gain complete knowledge from it. It aims at identifying the answers to the questions of reading comprehension. Moreover, it can be used for the purpose of skimming and scanning, and the concatenation of the sentences. It involves an analysis of the text by the deconstruction of the sentences and looking over each word, phrase and collocation which is not understandable with an aim of extracting the essence and meaning of the text as much as possible and learn the grammar and syntax rules. Further, the goals of intensive reading include understanding the gist and subject matter of the text, improving grammar and vocabulary, and understanding the thought of the author behind the text. The main focus of the learner is on the language used, rather than the text.

Most learners studying English often feel that if they don't understand every word they are not completing the exercise. Obviously that's wrong; you can't make big improvements without the most appropriate reading style for the function. Therefore identifying the reading style required in a specific reading situation should be decided prior to commencing reading.

We cannot talk about effective reading methods until we understand this point. There are solutions for improving english reading ability:

A. Enlarged vocabulary improves comprehension

Many teachers agree that vocabulary is the key to learning English well. The larger your vocabulary, the more effectively you can learn. This doesn't mean you should take a dictionary wherever you go. Enlarging vocabulary requires accumulating and using words on a daily basis. Easy methods to increase vocabulary as a part of daily life include reading everyday, using modern materials such as English language newspapers. Writing the new words and phrases in a notebook and creating new sentences with them ensures practice and creates understanding of usage. Review of new words is important for memory retention. When reviewing the new words, remember their usage in the context. There may be difficulties in the beginning, but persistence will increase understanding and reading pleasure.

B. Improve comprehension by guess Guessing the meaning from the context.

The context helps learners to guess the unknown vocabulary. Firstly the reader can refer to the immediate context and then to the wider context in which a word is found. The immediate context is the sentence in which a word is found and sometimes the sentences immediately before and after this. The wider context can include other sentences and even other paragraphs in a text. Both forms of context can often provide important information which help in deciding the meaning of unfamiliar words.



Context provides readers with numerous clues to deduce the unknown words. The main contextual clues include definition, synonym, antonym, and example and cause-effect relation. The signal words of definition include be, be called, be termed, mean, can be defined as, refer to, be known as, signify, denote, etc. The signal punctuations are: brackets, dash, comma, etc. Synonym signals include that is, that is to say, in other words. Antonym signals are although, while, whereas, however, but, yet, on the contrary, in contrast. The signal words of example are such as, unlike, for instance, a case in point, for example, etc. The signal words of cause and effect relation are because, because of, as, since, for.

C. Improve your comprehension by recognizing patterns.

Historically, humans have survived by identifying patterns. Scientists say that it is human nature to look for patterns in what we see. Our brains are always trying to make sense of the world around us, trying to fit everything into some kind of recognizable shape that has meaning for us.

There are four common patterns in a text. The first pattern is a listing related ideas or examples. In this pattern, the writer's main idea is stated in the form of a generalization, followed by a list of supporting details. Signal words for this pattern include: such as a few, other(s), another, first, second, third, several, many, in addition, numerous. The second pattern is sequence. In this pattern, the writer's main ideas include a series events or steps that follow one after another. The third is comparison and contrast. In this pattern, the writer's main idea explains similarities or differences, with signaling words including: like, both, similarly, however, but, unlike, while, and so on. The final pattern is cause-effect. When the main idea is developed by describing one event or action causing another, the cause-effect pattern is demonstrated. Causes and effects are part of daily life, therefore, this pattern is found very often in history books, science texts, and novels.

D. Clarify the main idea of a passage.

- Searching for the main idea.

The main idea of a piece of writing is the central point the author wants to make. It is stated in a topic sentence, which sets the thesis, but also the tone, voice and style of the writing. Generally speaking, in the majority of articles written for English readers it is located in the beginning of the writing, but may be re-iterated in the body and conclusion of the piece. Other language forms may change the position for the expression of the main idea. In addition, in many cases, the main idea is not always clearly stated. It is more difficult to identify a main idea when it is inferred or implied.

Summarising and restating the information in the passage helps decipher the main idea. Summarizing is taking larger selections of text and reducing them to their bare essentials: the gist, the key ideas, and the main points that are worth nothing and remembering. It's the distillation, condensation or reduction of a larger work into its primary notions.

Summaries capture the main ideas and the crucial details. Summarizing mainly includes noting key words, sentences and short passages.

- Critical thinking.



Experience demonstrates that to gain a better understanding of the text it is important to ask questions.

Critical thinking is a good method to help gain better understanding of the text. Few writers ever directly tell you what to think, they try to give enough data to allow readers to reach reasoned conclusion. The purpose of critical thinking in reading is to involve the reader in the reading activity more thoroughly.

E. Using the SQ3R strategy.

SQ3R is a useful and important method in reading to absorb written information. It helps build a good construct of the subject, creating a framework for appropriate insertion of facts. In addition, SQ3R enables readers to set study goals and prompts the use of revision techniques.

The acronym SQ3R stands for the five sequential techniques readers should use to read a book. Scan the "S" means a short survey, "Q" is question; the "3R" are read, recall and review. Survey means to scan the contents, introduction, and summaries to pick up a preliminary overview of the text. Question means note any questions on the subject that come to mind, or particularly interest you. The first "R" means read useful sections in detail, with attention to relevant points; the second R requires the reader to remember important sections once they are read, isolating the core facts or the essential processes behind the subject, and then assess how other information fits. The third R asks the reader to review the reading rev. This review can be done by re-reading the document, by expanding notes, or by discussing the material with other readers. A particularly effective method of reviewing information is to teach it to someone else.

By using SQ3R to actively read a document, the maximum benefit is gained from the reading time.

F. Activate background knowledge.

One of the biggest predictors of reading comprehension is background knowledge. Readers comprehend better when they actively think about and apply their knowledge of the topic and their own experiences.

Background knowledge can be used to increase reading comprehension, especially when dealing with unfamiliar topics. Here are some suggestions to apply background knowledge whenever needed.

Before reading, consider any related knowledge of the topic. While reading, activate other memories, personal experiences and any other kinds of information related to the details of the reading material.

After reading, research further at the library or on the Internet to find answers to the remaining questions.

Activating background knowledge is an important reading method for better comprehension.

G. Improve comprehension by improving grammatical understanding.

Grammar is also the essential and, some think, the most difficult part of English language study. It can be many students' weakest area.



English grammar is an important and useful tool in reading. It is a combination of the phonics and holistic argument. In order to understand the whole we must see the parts. Grammar is an important tool especially for weak readers to help them to understand ideas. It is the mathematics of literature and composition. Therefore, it is essential to study grammar and have a strong grammatical base. Grammar can be learned in small steps, and requires some general practice. Learn the basics of one grammar point, then move on to another. When readers are comfortable with the basics, they can move forward to study the details. Grammatical skills improve comprehension, and are worth studying.

H . Improve comprehension by forming good reading habits.

Most people wish they read more, because it can help increase knowledge and be more successful in a variety of fields. The following suggestions can help strengthen your reading ability. Always have reading material close by - bathroom, briefcase and bed.

Set a reading goal. Determine how much time can be spent on reading, or how many books to read over time. Reading groups and books clubs can support reading goals and provide discussion groups for deeper understanding.

Reading involves specific skills sets knowledge and common sense. By analyzing and generalising the skills in the process of reading, these skills and methods can be transferred easily to struggling readers.

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