

IMPROVING INTENSIVE READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH TASK-BASED LEARNING

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“Tell me and I will forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I will
learn”

Benjamin Franklin

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the problem of enhancing one of the challenging skills - intensive reading. In the initial stage, the history of teaching reading skills by professionals are analyzed, their methods and techniques which were implemented through years and their actuality of today's teaching system. The approach of teaching reading through task-based learning and the importance of intensive reading in today's education are discussed. We will take a look at historical background of teaching reading. Meanwhile, there is a reading method which is suggested by an author of this paper.

Keywords: Intensive reading, task-based language teaching, reading approach, skimming, scanning, reading competence, target tasks and pedagogical tasks.

INTRODUCTION

In every language, there are four basic skills which are needed to acquire the target language efficiently. To teach English language to students, educators have to face some issues for every skill with different methods. In order to fulfill this task, teachers should seek for approaches both classical and modern ones. Teaching reading as a particular skill should be taken into account that researchers have to consider. In this paper we will try to look for techniques and methods to consider about intensive reading.

First of all, it is crucial take a look the history of teaching reading. There are many eminent scholars who carried out several researches in the field of reading. One of the renowned researcher Zora Neale Hurston (1942-1996) noted ‘Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose. It is seeking that he who wishes may know the cosmic secrets of the world that they dwell therein (p.143). As it

is obvious from the speech, through gradual ‘poking and prying’, we get to know the secrets of every sphere deeply as well as techniques of teaching reading.

The main reason of learning history of reading instruction is to help educators to become from novice to experts of their own specialties. According to the scientific paper called ‘Standing on the shoulders of Giants’ by Mary Jo Fresch, there are three pivotal reasons to study past experiences of researchers in the field of reading.

- It helps teachers to gain more understanding on how reading approaches changed through years and what methods are remained until they became efficient.

- The historical underpinnings of different areas of reading play as a fundamental work for up-to-date researches. If researchers study these past papers, they tend to sort out key aspects of reading easily.

- We can hear the voices of significant educators from the past by reading and analyzing the study of earlier researchers. Their voices frequently provide historical and contemporary ideology clarity.

METHODS

Task-based learning reading comprehension has become one of the most used method in the field of recent teaching reading. N Prabhu, a teacher and a researcher in Bangalore, south India, invented task-based language teaching (TBLT) in its current form in the 1980’s. He asserted that “bringing about in the learner a preoccupation with meaning, speaking and doing” will best facilitate language acquisition, which is “unconscious process”. He thought that utilizing proper assignments would facilitate students’ natural second language acquisition. In this type of teaching reading, students are expected to improve their intensive reading skills.

David Nunan, another scholar gave broad understanding about a certain type of teaching in his book “Task based language teaching”. He tried to give a particular definition for the concept of ‘task’. He believes that tasks are divided into 2 types in terms of their function. His researches are based on Long’s perspective (1985;89). It says that, target tasks in other words, real life tasks are designed according to daily basis jobs, such as: a conversation in the restaurant, describing the destination, booking a flight and etc. After completing these tasks, learners think they can handle those situations and use the language properly. When these tasks are altered and adapted for the learners, these tasks carry pedagogical nature. For example, a telephone conversation for explaining The present continuous. These distinctions of the tasks are crucial while designing suitable tasks for reading comprehension.

RESULTS

Main steps to implement task-based language teaching in class

After analyzing prominent researchers' works, the author came up with a practical method to improve intensive reading comprehension. As there are main 4 types of reading:

- Skimming
- Scanning
- Intensive reading
- Extensive reading

All of them above are named according to the functions. For the first two of them are differentiated by looking for overall meaning and key features of the text. The latter two are totally distinctive. Intensive reading is to comprehend completely the material within different exercises, given vocabulary, while extensive reading is dealt with reading loner and easier texts for enjoyment and develop general understanding of the given material for an extended period of time, such as novels and magazines and etc.

When it comes to intensive reading, skimming and scanning are important for this method. Teachers should encourage students to read the given text attentively. They have to certain level article so that students can comprehend it. Then they ought to highlight unfamiliar words without looking them up yet. This helps learners to guess the meaning of those words according to the context. The next step is to find out the definition of those words and reread the text, in the second time, they are asked to seek for key features of this text. It is also suggested that, after each paragraph, students need to summarize the information given in it. They can do it either orally or written to understand the piece of information. After analyzing the text in this way, students are given a set of questions referring to the meaning of the text. Students answer them by taking some notes and explain them aloud. This provides not only the information to stay in long term memory, but also enhance speaking skills of learners. After that, the teacher gives the other bunch of tasks which should be answered written by finding TRUE/FALSE/NOT GIVEN information from the text. After this part is finished, it is recommended to discuss the answers of students comparing with each other and giving feedback on each student's performance. In the last stage, students are asked to write down all the new vocabulary and make at least 2 complex sentences to memorize them.

This method shows a good practical effect, if it is done correctly without altering the order of process. However, this method requires a great amount of time and effort from both students and teachers, as teachers have to make proper questions and can handle the process perfectly. So, this process should be done at most twice a week. In addition to that, when this method is used in classroom to enhance intensive reading, it is suggested to utilize student-centered approach in order not to put too much pressure on students. If they do these tasks by themselves and with interest, it will prove effective.

DISCUSSION

Furthermore, according to Venezky (1987) in his 'History of reading books', "the view of history I espouse is that of multiple causation, that is, that changes in reader content, instruction technology and other primary characteristics of education cannot be accounted for by any single factor". He suggests that, cultural and political factors might cause the changes in teaching reading process. Due to external environment, teachers have to alter their way of teaching and it goes without saying that this may affect significantly on teaching process. For example, the curriculum, classroom requirements and etc.

In early 1990s, teaching reading saw a significant shift, as teachers started to realize learners needed to be able to read for a purpose, in other words to find information. According to the book called, "the Psychology and Pedagogy of reading", teachers should ask themselves about the process of teaching reading. In the beginning of 1930's, book publishers realized the need for materials for children to read. In those times, only religious books or very complicated books were implemented in classrooms, and children were extremely bored with them. It made them to discourage to learn effectively. Afterwards, book publishers began to print out leveled books which were different from according to the level of learners. At that time, reading comprehension skills were not improved by these books, because the materials were easy and simple.

CONCLUSION

Throughout years, thanks to researchers and educators, teaching a reading skill has become cumulatively practical. Overall, task-based language teaching has been implemented by the teachers in the last few years, it has already shown its positive results. Intensive reading comprehension could be strengthened with the usage of certain tasks and distinct teaching process.

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