ESSENTIAL PROBLEMS OF TEACHING READING TO STUDENTS WITH INTERMEDIATE LEVEL OF ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

Developing strong reading skills in students is one of the key goals of every early education program. It is through reading that students expand their vocabulary and learn about the world. Reading is also the key to success in spelling and writing. Being a fast and efficient reader is important for classroom based lessons, but also for satisfying homework requirements and performing well on standardized exams. The present article deals with the essential problems concerning the process of teaching reading to students. The author of the article discusses some methods as a solution of this problem.

Keywords: *communicative method, intermediate level students, poor reading skill, struggling readers, guessing from the context, background knowledge, memorizing words, types of learning.*

АННОТАЦИЯ

Развитие прочных навыков чтения у учащихся является одной из ключевых целей каждой программы раннего образования. Благодаря чтению учащиеся расширяют свой словарный запас и познают мир. Чтение также является ключом к успеху в правописании и письме. Умение быстро и эффективно читать важно для уроков в классе, а также для выполнения домашних заданий и хорошей успеваемости на стандартизированных экзаменах. В настоящей статье рассматриваются существенные проблемы, касающиеся процесса обучения учащихся чтению. Автор статьи рассматривает некоторые методы решения этой проблемы.

Ключевые слова: *коммуникативный метод, учащиеся среднего уровня, плохой навык чтения, затрудненное чтение, угадывание по контексту, фоновые знания, запоминание слов, виды обучения.*

INTRODUCTION

No one would deny nowadays that the general field of language teaching as a scientific and academic discipline and, more particularly, English language teaching (ELT) as part of it stand out for their strong dynamism and continuous evolution and

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development. Many teachers are concerned about the numbers of intermediate level students who struggle with reading. Studies indicate that when students have poor reading skills, they rarely catch up. Struggling readers encounter negative consequences: grade retention, assignment to special education classrooms, or participation in long-term remedial services. Further, as they progress through the grade levels, the academic distance from those who read well grows more pronounced.

Why do some students struggle with reading and what can be done to increase their success? In what follows, we first explore common reasons why some students struggle with reading and suggest antidotes for enhancing their achievement. Next, we identify some essential methods of teaching reading that help students acquire reading skills.

METHODS USED

There are several causes of underachievement in reading. The four most common ones we found include 1) reading role models and life experiences, 2) concentrating a lot on unknown words, 3) visual processing, and 4) learning disabilities. When teachers proactively address these underdeveloped skills in the classroom, struggling readers can make progress.

At-risk readers often lack role models who use the same Standard English as that taught in educational institutions. Effective role models for students are those who can explain the purposes for reading and can model fluency, expression, and inflection with Standard English. Without such role models, students typically receive limited exposure to literature, vocabulary, and figures of speech or common everyday phrases.

To increase the amount of language a student hears and uses, teachers can play books on tape, conduct read-alouds, and use a variety of oral activities. Struggling readers sometimes lack background experiences that classwork assumes they have had. For example, if students are reading a story about making cookies, but have only experienced store-bought varieties, they might not understand the excitement of a character who enjoys the smell of baking cookies. Educators can build commonly shared background knowledge through real-world experiences, simulations, visuals, or storytelling.

Teachers can also point out little words contained within bigger words when a struggling reader gets stuck. This important decoding skill can be taught by posting words on classroom walls or by having students keep word banks of unfamiliar terms.

As they construct the words, they learn new vocabulary and how to search for the little words within larger ones. When finished, students can be asked to read all of the words out loud and to discuss the meaning of the words they don't know.

Another main skill struggling readers lack is the ability to quickly recognize sight words. Due to the slower than normal development of "sight vocabulary," that many can read fluently and automatically, the lack of rapid word recognition limits comprehension for at-risk readers. It is therefore important to teach common words. One approach, 'Dolch sight words', rank words for the frequency of their appearance in print and can be used to teach word recognition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Comprehension is a crucial aspect of reading. Unfortunately, some readers often struggle in this area due to lack of familiarity with the content. For example, students who are unfamiliar with an airplane may find it challenging to understand a story about airplanes. Providing real-life experiences for students is helpful in building shared background knowledge.

There are other areas that limit comprehension for struggling readers. These are lack of fluency, inability to transfer information to new settings, finding the main idea in a story, and using context clues while reading. When students stumble on words, the amount of information they can comprehend is limited. As mentioned above, the development of sight word vocabulary allows students to construct meaning from their reading rather than simply trying to identify the words. Asking students to engage in a variety of listening activities is one way to model fluency, inflection, and correct expression as well. Many teachers also ask higher level questions related to the stories the students hear so that students can slowly apply these questioning skills to their independent reading.

Struggling readers often have a difficult time transferring old knowledge to new situations. One strategy to remedy this problem is to teach students word families. This helps them use their knowledge of a known word to decode an unfamiliar word with the same letter pattern.

Another problem almost all students face is that they stop themselves from reading as soon as the see an unknown word. On the one hand while searching for the meaning of an unknown word in the dictionary can enrich his/her vocabulary, but on the other hand, they lose the track of the story. By stopping for every unknown word while reading, to our mind, students can spend a lot of time not for reading only, but also for the analysis, which can make the process of reading little bit boring. We think that teachers make use such methods of dealing with unknown words like

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'guessing from the context', 'breaking the words into several parts'. The first means that the learner is asked to find the meaning of the unknown word from the context. For example, the student reads the line "*It was an extremely hot April day. The sun was shining azurely.*" We underlined the word which is, to our mind, the word which is the most difficult one in this context. How can we guess the meaning of the word '*azurely*' from the context? In order to do so we have to think logically. First of all it is not usually extremely hot in April days; secondly a day is not usually so hot when the sun is not shining brightly. So, we can guess that, the word '*azurely*' in the above given context means '*brightly*'. The second method is important when a context contains a lot of long words with several word building elements. For example the word '*astonishingly*' may not be found from the dictionary, but the verb to astonish is given the first. So, if the students know beforehand the types of word building means, they can guess that the word is an adverb, and its possible meaning is '*in an amazing manner*' which comes from the meaning of the verb '*to astonish*' – '*affect with wonder*'.

Finding the main idea can also prove challenging. Teachers can model self-questioning during listening activities to focus students' attention on the main idea of the text. Students can also be asked about a selection before, during, and after reading. For example, before reading, teachers can preview the selection and activate students' background knowledge. During reading, students can be asked to monitor for meaning and pose questions of themselves about their reading. After a selection, students can summarize the content and relate it to themselves or something that they already know.

Comprehension can be further enhanced with the intentional use of context clues. While they are reading, students can be asked questions such as *"Does that make sense? How can we make it make sense?"* If the passage did not make sense request that students 1) read it again, 2) read to their partners, 3) stop and think, or 4) talk to their partners. Monitoring for meaning is a skill that struggling readers need in order to strengthen their comprehension of text.

Some students have difficulty processing and memorizing information. Frequently, some will learn words in one context and not transfer them to the next. By activating prior knowledge, teachers can help students make connections between past and current life experiences.

Memorization can also prove challenging. Teachers may want to emphasize the importance of memorizing sight words since they will be encountered frequently in

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text. Sight words can be reinforced by posting them on a "word wall" in the classroom or by having students make individualized booklets of words to know.

Struggling readers, like all students, learn in different ways. Reading classrooms that include kinesthetic, musical, or other modalities can enhance learning. Students can listen to books on tape, act out a part from a play they are reading, or retell a story on a board. Not only can students benefit from learning in different ways, they also benefit from different groupings. Some suggestions include having partner/peer activities, buddy reading/cross grade, independent, and teamwork. No matter how struggling readers are grouped or what modalities are used to teach, as one reading specialist asserted, "Struggling readers need to hear it, see it, say it, and write it before they can learn it".

CONCLUSION

While the educators and the structured programs may approach teaching reading comprehension skills differently, common themes were evident. Reading comprehension could be improved through teacher modeling, providing students with real or simulated experiences to establish commonly shared prior knowledge, reading for a variety of purposes, teaching the specific behaviors that good readers use before, during, and after reading, and repeatedly exposing students to a story and giving them immediate feedback on their comprehension of its elements.

According to the experienced educators, reading at home reinforces the skills and concepts students must acquire. Additionally, when teachers support their students by taking the time to listen and help them read, it signals that reading is important.

As noted above, there are four components that can be met among students who progress in reading. It should be stated that there are many worthwhile reading programs available and in use in schools.

Teacher's knowledge, training, and skill are essential to implementing any program that focuses on struggling readers. It appears likely, however, that teachers will have more success when they use programs that incorporate reading for meaning, context guessing, and an at-home component. Struggling readers can and will make progress in their reading abilities when taught by informed and committed educators.

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