

Understand Language Skills: READING AND WRITING

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- **READING**

Meaning of Reading.

Reading is one of the skills among the four skills of language learning. After learning to listen and speak a language, a person has to learn to read and then write a language in order to have mastery of all the four skills of language learning.

Reading, like listening, is a decoding process – a process to recognize graphic symbols and their corresponding vocal sounds. Reading is a complex process involving many physical, intellectual and often emotional reactions. Reading is an ability of enabling the learners to understand a language in written form with the purpose of being able to extract the thoughts, facts, meanings and information that it was meant to give.

Reading is a passive but a most important skill of language learning. Learning to read a language means to decipher the whole world. By reading good English, we can develop a feeling and insight into the working of the languages. Reading holds the key to the development of real communicative competence in English.

The reading skill consists of three important components:

1. Recognition of the graphic marks.
2. Correlation of these with formal linguistic elements.
3. Correlation of these with the meaning.

Importance of Reading.

The importance of reading can be well described in the form of following points:

1. Learning to read English is an easy method and a child average or below average can begin at very early stage.
2. Reading leads to better understanding of the language hence it gives a better hold on language.

3. Reading acquaints a learner with the latest trends and happenings the world over. It helps in knowing world new, information about discoveries and inventions etc. through journals, newspapers, magazines, books etc.
4. Reading is the best source of recreation as books are the best and the everlasting friends. In leisure hours one can enter the world of knowledge, the world of literature or entertainment with the help of many books available on various aspects.
5. Moral and value based education can be imparted through books.
6. Reading equips the learner with complete control over words and patterns which they are to use during speaking or they are to listen while someone is speaking.
7. Reading enhances experience.

Lord Bacon has rightly remarked, “Reading makes us a full man and writing an exact man.”

Aims of teaching reading.

1. To read English with accuracy.
2. To read with correct intonation, stress and proper pronunciation.
3. To read fluently.
4. To read with comprehension.
5. To enable students to take pleasure in reading.
6. To develop reading habits needed in real life situations.
7. To develop an interest in reading so as to form a habit.

LOUD READING

Loud reading is also known as ‘oral reading’. Generally, it is to be introduced after two months of reading when the children learn what they have to read in a book. Oral reading is a useful means of mastering the language code. It is motivating for the young children and can therefore be well utilized for practicing the structures. It is also an effective device for quick testing of reading comprehension and for improving pronunciation.

Aims of Loud Reading.

1. To enable the students to read with correct pronunciation, articulation, intonation, stress and rhythm.
2. To enable the students to understand the meaning.
3. To enable the students to read with correct expressions.
4. To test reading comprehension.
5. To give through practice in correct reading.
6. To test knowledge of speaking structures/sentences while making correct usage of various organs.
7. To sharpen their recognition of different sounds.

Procedure.

It has been recognized that loud reading is of great advantage at the early stages of learning but the teacher has to proceed through some steps:

1. A model reading is given by the teacher, upholding all the basic principles of proper pronunciation, articulation, intonation etc.
2. The teacher can repeat the model reading twice, thrice depending upon the group of students.
3. Students are made to read aloud. Individual reading by students enables a teacher to check and correct pronunciation etc. in time.

Merits.

1. Students learn the proper method of reading with accuracy of skills.
2. The mistakes related to pronunciation etc. can be checked well in time.
3. Loud reading trains the auditory organs.
4. Loud reading removes threat, develops confidence and skill of giving lectures.

Drawbacks.

1. Loud reading is not a source of pleasure.
2. While one student is reading aloud, other may not pay attention.
3. Loud reading is not allowed in libraries or even adjacent classes which may disturb others.

SILENT READING

Silent reading is reading is more effective way of reading and is therefore more applicable and useful in life. In silent reading, learners usually read a passage while abstaining from making sound, whispering, murmuring or even moving lips while reading. This type of reading usually follows loud reading and is useful at the advanced/higher levels of learning a language. Silent reading gives a sense of fulfillment and achievement.

Aims of Silent Reading.

1. To enable the students to read without making sounds audible to others so that they may not get disturbed.
2. To enable the students to read of their own pace.
3. To enable them to read with comprehension.
4. To enable them to derive pleasure out of reading.

Procedure.

1. The teacher may give a brief introduction of the context and ask the students to follow silent reading.
2. To move around to check the attention of students focused in their material while reading silently.
3. After giving them a fixed time for reading, the teacher may put up a few questions to check students' comprehension.

Merits.

1. It is economical as it saves time.

2. It saves energy as well.
3. It aims at developing interest in reading.
4. It initiates deep and intensive study.

Drawbacks.

1. It is not advantageous for beginners.
2. It may not teach correct pronunciation.
3. It provides no scope to check whether the students are actually reading.
4. It cannot be employed to correct the mistakes as the students are reading silently and they sometimes even skip the matter which they cannot understand.

INTENSIVE READING

Intensive reading implies the ability of pupils to read not only for detailed comprehension of meaning but also for mastering the structures and vocabulary. Intensive reading means assimilation of language which consists of study of words, phrases and sentence structures even without a teacher. The learners in their spare time can resort to intensive reading – studying of sentences, structures including grammar, grasping of the sentence patterns besides getting information.

Intensive reading means understanding the text with its arguments, symbolic, emotional and social overtness. It means to understand both linguistic and literary aspects of the context.

Aims of Intensive Reading.

1. To enable the students to speak English correctly.
2. To increase their vocabulary, knowledge and command over English.
3. To enable them to master the language both linguistically and literally.

Procedure.

In teaching intensive reading following steps are to be followed:

1. **Introduction.** The teacher may introduce a passage by explaining the social, cultural or any other background.
2. **Model Reading.** A model presentation may be taken up by the teacher. The model reading may be once twice or thrice.
3. **Loud Reading.** It should be followed by allowing the students to read aloud while the teacher can check and correct the various requisites of language learning.
4. **Explanation.** The teacher should explain those items, words or phrases which the students fail to understand.
5. **Questioning.** The teacher may ask some questions to check comprehension of meaning, vocabulary, grammar aspects and intelligence questions.

Merits.

1. It increases the active vocabulary.
2. It helps in learning grammar besides understanding the text.
3. It thus improves power of conception and expression.

Drawbacks.

1. This approach is long and seems uninteresting.
2. It lays much stress on language's aspect and thus has less scope for pleasure.

EXTENSIVE READING

Extensive reading implies that pupils read for information or simply to draw pleasure out of reading. It is also called 'Rapid Reading' or 'Independent Silent Reading'. This kind of reading emphasizes general comprehension and not language study. It means to read silently, quickly to understand the subject matter efficiently and to read without the help of teacher. This enable the learner to ignore certain paragraphs or lines not so important and to skip on to the important and interested ones.

According to Thompson and Wyatt, The main purpose of extensive reading is the cultivation of a taste for reading and it seeks by encouraging the habit of visualizing what is read to make reading a form visual instruction.

Aims of Extensive Reading.

1. To understand the meaning of the concept as quickly and efficiently as possible.
2. To develop the habit of silent reading and increasing passive vocabulary.
3. To develop a habit for pleasure reading.
4. To concentrate upon the context thus developing the skill of making notes of relevant information for future use.

Procedure.

Exact procedure to be adopted varies according to the varying subject matter. Anyhow the main steps are:

1. **Introduction.** The teacher gives the main hints/background of passage and briefly classifies the difficult points.
2. **Silent Reading.** The students read silently with a good speed.
3. **Questioning.** The teacher asks a few questions to judge the students' reading comprehension.

Merits.

1. It helps to gather necessary and relevant information utilizing less time.
2. It keeps the class busy and active.
3. It increases passive vocabulary.
4. It is helpful in self-study and assignment preparation.

Drawbacks.

The only drawback is that sometimes a learner may skip out some necessary point or also may commit grammatical error as it means a quick and rapid reading.

SKIMMING

Skimming means to read the matter and gather the necessary and main features contained therein. It is a technique applied in extensive reading where a learner reads the content, writes down the main points and then utilizes the information gathered for future use. For example skimming of a prose lesson like a story or a narrative means going through it by reading it silently and collecting the main points or to reach the climax of the story, to get moral out of the story, to understand the theme of the story.

Talking in terms of poetry, skimming means going through the whole poem deriving pleasure out of it and of course the gist of the poem. Skimming saves a lot of time. It is usually helpful for higher classes where they have to read a lot and draw conclusion rapidly. It develops self-confidence among learners as they can interpret the things in their own ways.

SCANNING

Scanning can be summed up in words, “To read in between lines” meaning to read each and everything. Everything contained in the text is read thoroughly, intensively and very objectively. The learner has to scan the book for the content or information one needs. There is no scope for leaving anything. The reader has to read the most difficult as well as the easiest item.

- Scanning is again fuse in higher classes so as to develop the habit of intensive study, hard work and deep understanding. It develops the scientific attitude of looking at things minutely, patiently, observing and understanding them and then drawing out conclusions instead of rushing to conclusions.

Referencing/Study Skills

Referencing skill mostly consists of the use of dictionary skill, thesaurus skill and use of encyclopedia while reading and its comprehension.

Dictionary Skill: Use of dictionary for better reading comprehension has been widely practiced by new language users especially while reading. In modern times, the new technologies have offered various type of dictionary, such as Electronic Dictionary, Mobile App based dictionary, computer-based dictionary, an inbuilt dictionary with MS Word, etc. These electronic and ICT based dictionaries have revolutionized the perfect use of English language.

Thesaurus Skill: Thesaurus is another form of a dictionary with an advanced version of synonyms, antonyms and, its usage for a better understanding of the word and its contextual meaning. The thesaurus is used at an advanced level of language learning. Thesaurus is popularly used for higher education in India, but modern English medium schools have also

started usage of a thesaurus in its ELT syllabus.

Encyclopedia Skill: Encyclopedia is a higher and advanced form of the dictionary for a conceptual and theoretical understanding of the word and its concept. It provides the detailed and historical origin of the word along with meaning and illustrations which help advanced level learning to comprehend the subject-specific concept, not merely the word meaning.

Reading Defects and Their Cure

Reading is an important skill of language learning. Reading defects may arise in some children suffering from certain neuro or optho defects. Child suffering from any such illness misreads what he is reading, makes errors in pronunciation, often emits words and letters, seems to be slow in understanding and reading and most commonly forgets and misses the meaning of the words read previously.

It is the duty of the teacher to watch and understand each and every learner. The children suffering from some serious complications can be referred only to professional doctors. However, children having minor defects can be helped by the teacher to a greater extent giving a little more attention to the child suffering of certain reading defects. He can place him near the board, giving him some extra time and help in reading/writing things, maintaining a record and arranging parent – teacher meeting. He can reveal the realities to the parents who can help the child at home and also refer him to some professional doctor/guidance counselor. If necessary the glasses may be put on after consultations with an eye specialist.

In developing reading skills, certain things are to be kept in mind by a language teacher.

1. The selection and gradation of material.
2. The subject matter should be suitable to the age and interest of the learners.
3. The selection of font size in the books.
4. There should be a lot of repetitions and drill work.
5. Gradually, a vocabulary of certain new words should be introduced.

In spite of various efforts put by the teachers, certain reading defects may arise in certain children. Some of them can be:

1. Some children are in the habit of using their fingers on the words they are reading. This finger pointing habit hinders the pace of reading. The teachers should check in such defects at the right time.
2. Some children omit certain words and letters while rushing to the next ones. This also leads to missing the meaning behind what they read. Teachers should pay full attention to the students while developing their reading skill.
3. Another reading defect in children can be that the child read aloud or keep on murmuring the next what they are asked to go for silent reading. This bad reading habit may interfere reading speed with their comprehension and so this should be checked at proper time.
4. Some children move their eyes back to the words read before and keep on repeating the previous words with the new words instead of reading faster. This habit of regression as a result, slows down their reading speed. This bad reading habit should be totally eliminated.

It is really a difficult task to help students achieve the ability to read with speed, with proper pronunciation and articulation without omissions and errors. But then it is a great achievement if teachers prove successful in fulfilling these objectives.

- **WRITING SKILLS**

Stages of Writing

Pre-Writing is the first stage of writing which begins with planning. This stage requires thorough background knowledge about the topic and a proper direction towards the execution of writing plans.

Writing: This is the actual stage of putting the ideas into the paper with the help of topic planning, using adequate vocabularies and grammatical arrangements. It also requires a proper combination of coverage of topic with an introduction, central theme and concluding the topic. The last stage of writing consists of editing and proofreading before coming to the final draft of the writing.

Publishing: Publishing is the final stage of writing which is done after an edited version of written texts. It requires consultation with the publishing house/agency and bringing out with the printed version of written texts for public use.

Process of Writing

Writing is considered as a process as well as product in the expression of language. A learner has to follow the steps given below before completing a writing task.

Conceive the idea: Conceiving the idea is the first process to begin the writing where previous knowledge of the writer and proposed topic for writing is amalgamated.

Planning to Execute Writing: This is the process under which the writer plans to describe the different parts of writing. It includes the structure for introduction, the main body of the theme of topic and conclusion which are done in paragraphs and stepwise.

Actual Writing: This is the phase of the drafting under which the writer actually writes with the help of adequate use of vocabulary and grammar. It requires thematic clubbing of ideas into an essay or article form. This phase is a rough draft of the writing subject to revision in the next part.

Reviewing and Editing: This is the process of writing considered as the most important because it applies proofreading, language and content editing and finalization of the draft as well. It can also be considered as the pre-stage for publication.

Final Draft: This is the process of providing finishing touch, modification and beautification stage of an article or essay to be sent for publication.

Note-Taking and Note-Making

Note Taking: Note taking is a writing activity based on listening or reading stages. It is brief and pointed in nature which helps the writer to jot down important items for future use. This is an important activity but mostly considered incomplete without note making activity.

Note Making: Note making is another important activity in the process of writing. It requires the writer to revise the points taken during note-taking with the help of other related resources. It can also be considered as a revised activity of important points made while reading or listening.

Formal and Informal Writing

Formal Writing: Formal writing is performed for structured and professional purposes. Writing letters to the authority for official purposes is considered as formal letter writing. A letter to the Principal, Vice Chancellor, Head of the Department, etc. is an example of formal writing.

Informal Writing: Informal writing is performed as writing for casual purposes. It can be considered as a written form of spoken conversation language. For example: letters written to parents and friend.

Poetry: It is a part of literature, it helps in creative poem writing.

Short Story: It is also a part of literature which engages learners in writing limited narratives.

Diary: It is a very creative and real-life expression activity which people do to documents one's experiences.

Notices: It is a short intimation used in the offices for formal communication purposes.

Articles: It is a detail writing on some particular idea or thought relevant to the stakeholders of a particular discipline.

Report: It is a written a document of any formal meeting, seminar, conference, etc.

Dialogues: It is a communicative activity between two or more people.

Speech: It is an oral as well as written activity meant to address the public of defined audience.

Advertisement: It is a promotional activity in which a written or visual piece of information is spread to the mass.

Higher Order Skills

Creative Thinking-Writing: Writing a piece of paper with divergent ideas which include imagination, fantasy, creativity, etc. is considered as creative thinking or writing.

Questioning: Questioning is again considered a higher order skill because it engaged the individual or group to think over, understand, comprehend and then make some query in terms of oral or written form.

Critical Writing: Critical writing is considered as higher order activity because it demands creative writing regarding bias-free, negative, positive and neutral ideas related to a particular topic/subject.

Qualities of Good Handwriting

Good handwriting gives a pleasant impression and adds to one's personality. According to S. S. M Gaudar, "The inculcation of correct writing habit is a duty which the teacher dare not shirk. It is a part of the general training of character. Hence, it is highly desirable that children should be carefully taught the art of the hand writing."

The qualities of good handwriting are:

1. **Legibility.** A good handwriting demands legibility. Each alphabet and word should be legible.
2. **Proper Spacing.** A proper space is to be left in between alphabets of a word and words of a sentence. Para spacing is to be kept in mind.
3. **Uniformity.** Uniformity is to be maintained throughout the content.
4. **Distinctiveness.** Every word should be distinct and clearly visible emphasizing its own importance.
5. **Good Styled.** There are various styles in writing. A proper single style maintained throughout. A simple handwriting is always a good handwriting.
6. **Straight Lines.** Good handwriting always runs in straight lines with a same start.
7. **Size of Letters.** The size of the letters has to be in accordance with the space available and the age group of the learners.
8. **Use of Proper Punctuation Marks.** Punctuation marks are like a beautiful garland to a beautiful bride. Thus the use of proper punctuation lines up the good handwriting and adds charm and beauty to the handwriting.

Defects in Writing Skill and Their Improvement

Cause of Bad Handwriting.

Some of the causes of bad handwriting are:

1. Many teachers have a very bad handwriting and as the children imitate their teachers, they imitate bad handwriting also.
2. The teachers never lay stress on the qualities of good handwriting.
3. The use of wrong pens spoils the handwriting.
4. The postures of some students spoil their handwriting.
5. The wrong ways of holding a pen or pencil also effects handwriting.
6. Lack of practice in writing.
7. Four – lined notebooks are used for a very short period.

Measures for Improvement.

Some of the measures for improvement to acquire good handwriting are:

1. Use of four lined notebooks.
2. Use of proper sitting notebooks.
3. Properly holding a pen or pencil.
4. The teacher's guidance throughout the session mostly at early stage of learning writing.
5. Showing model handwriting and motivating the students.
6. Checking and correcting mistakes of students at all the stages by the teacher is very important.
7. Using blackboards for difficult words.
8. Individual attention.
9. Rigorous practice.
10. Arranging handwriting competitions.
11. Awarding the students with good handwriting.
12. Displaying the good handwriting material of students in the classrooms, corridors, display boards etc.