



Reading Skills in English Language Classroom: A Strategic Approach

Dr. Cheekatipalli Sree Vijaya Durga

Lecturer in English

Government Degree College, Yerraguntla
YSR, Kadapa District, Andhra Pradesh, India

Abstract

The reading skill is one of the important aspects of the second language acquisition because it allows the learner to gain access to academic knowledge, to be able to exercise critical thinking skills, and be able to fully engage in global communication. This study will analyse those factors that affect reading development in second language learners as well as discuss the effectiveness of certain reading strategies that can enhance vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. The study is based on cognitive, cultural, and psychological aspects that influence reading performance of learners. The processing speed, memory, and attention are cognitive abilities that can greatly define the manner in which learners perceive and relate textual materials. Another crucial factor may be cultural background since an unknown cultural reference and an idiomatic expression can be an obstacle to understanding. Moreover, such psychological factors as motivation, confidence, and anxiety determine the involvement of learners in the reading activities. To meet these, research questions are developed to explore the effects of guided reading which includes contextual vocabulary learning, skimming, scanning, intensive reading and extensive reading. Short-term training programme was introduced to test the reading abilities of learners by seeing an improvement. The results also demonstrate that a regular practice of strategic reading methods can produce a quantifiable improvement of comprehension, reading speed, and vocabulary retention. Guided practice enabled learners to show heightened confidence, enhance their skills in inferencing better and develop more efficient ways of processing texts. Extensive reading stimulated general fluent and reading interest whereas intensive reading developed critical ability and interpretation of complex constructs.

Keywords: interpretation, processing, intensive, vocabulary

Introduction

Language acquisition is an important factor in human growth and communication. It is very important to bridge people, exchange a culture, and provide personal and career development. In a Globalized world, speaking a second language especially English is very beneficial as it has many benefits, which are improved employment opportunities, better cognitive abilities, and cultural diversity. English as a global lingua franca is very common in international business, academia and technology (Crystal 2003). With the realization of the significance of language acquisition, the need to master language skills, especially, reading, writing, listening and speaking, becomes quite apparent to ensure the successful communication in both social and business spheres.

One of the most crucial skills of language acquisition is reading. It is the gate into vocabulary development, comprehensibility and fluency. Reading also enables the learners to access a steady stream of linguistic constructs, cultural subtleties as well as idiomatic expressions that they otherwise might not have experienced through a listening methodology. In addition, reading is at the center of enriching one learning base, both academic, career, and personal. It has been established that extensive reading has a positive effect on vocabulary development and the improved comprehension of syntax that subsequently leads to an improved level of language proficiency (Nation 2001). Therefore, it is not only a crucial condition of language learning but also the key to academic performance and cultural literacy.



The aim of this paper is to discuss the best strategies of enhancing English reading. Focusing on both general issues and practical strategies, this paper will offer a detailed isle of how a learner can improve his or her proficiency in reading. Special consideration will be given to the strategies that are aimed at the development of vocabulary, reading comprehension and fluency, which are essential in the context of the holistic approach to the language learning.

Second language acquisition (SLA) Theories.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a field of study that can be useful in understanding the process through which learners acquire language skills including reading. A number of outstanding theories have discussed the mechanisms of second language reading.

Input Hypothesis: The input hypothesis is a hypothesis put forward by Stephen Krashen, that suggests that language learners learn language optimally when presented with comprehensible input that is slightly higher than their current levels of understanding, usually referred to as $i+1$. Krashen explains that language can be acquired when one reads slightly complex (but comprehensible) reading materials (Krashen 1982). This theory emphasizes the use of graded readers and context-based texts in the process of acquisition of reading skills.

Interactive Model of Reading: Interactive Model of Reading was created by Rumelhart, and proposes that reading is an active process in which bottom-up (decoding) and top-down (utilizing prior knowledge) reading processes interact. In this model, the focus is on the interplay between the background knowledge and the linguistic knowledge of a reader (phonology and syntax) in an effort to make sense of the text. In the second language learning, the model emphasizes the role of the combination of vocabulary knowledge and the contextual knowledge in enhancing reading comprehension (Rumelhart 1977).

Schema Theory: The schema theory is another theory that was developed by Bartlett, and was expanded by other scholars, it states that readers apply their prior mental frames or schemas to interpret and make sense of new information. The implications of this theory as applied to the context of second language learning indicate that the existing knowledge and cultural background of learners will be of great importance in their understanding and interaction with a reading. Readers employ their schemas during reading, and those who have higher developed and adapted culturally are likely to understand texts (Anderson 1984).

Language Learning and the Importance of Reading

Reading is also the essential part of learning the language because it is among the main methods through which learners are introduced to new vocabulary and language systems. Extensive reading also allows learners to read words in context; thus, they are better remembered and contribute to the acquisition of receptive and productive vocabulary. Besides, reading comprehension, the topic of acquiring meaning of a text, is directly related to the capacity of a learner to process new information, draw inferences and have a relationship between ideas.

Reading also contributes to grammatical competence since learners get to note the syntactic forms of the language when they are in context. Such exposure is what helps in the acquisition of language proficiency as well as in the capacity to communicate using the language effectively both in written and oral communication (Grabe 2009). Therefore reading plays a very important role in vocabulary development as well as the general language proficiency and fluency.



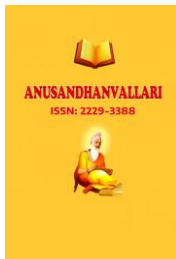
The reading skill is influenced by multiple issues, which are interconnected especially amongst second language learners. It is not merely the process of noticing written words, but a complicated process, which entails cognitive, cultural, and psychological aspects. Cognitive development is a factor that is significant in the success of learners reading and understanding texts. Reading involves much more than the passive process of decoding word groups; it involves the ability to pay attention, memory, reasoning, and processing speed. Among them, the working memory is of particular significance, as it permits the learners to memorize the information and at the same time to interpret it and relate ideas throughout a passage. The readers who possess higher cognitive abilities tend to have an advantage in regard to textual organization, which means that they can find relationships between ideas and make logical conclusions based on what they read. Cognitive development tends to enhance a better understanding and reading would become more fruitful.

Cultural background coupled with cognition plays an important role on how learners interpret texts. No reader reads written material without the prism of previous experience, values and background knowledge. In second language situations, understanding usually becomes hard when reading materials have strange cultural associations, societal habits or phraseologies. These factors can produce distortion between the learner and the text and interpretation may be more challenging and incomplete in some instances. The learner might not be able to get beyond superficial knowledge without the cultural context that can be used to interpret such references. The cultural awareness, then, is a crucial part of the reading process, since it assists learners in getting out of the literal meaning and becomes more involved with the intended meaning of a text.

The psychological factors also play a role in the development of reading ability in that they determine the willingness, confidence, and consistency in practice of the learner. Another factor that requires a high level of motivation is the fact that only seriously interested learners would be more willing to read regularly and not to give up at all when they meet with a challenging situation. This continued practice builds up gradually knowledge, fluency and interpretation. Conversely, anxiety, frustration or an unpleasant attitude towards reading can demoralize the learners to practice and seriously slack their progress. Tension or self-doubt about reading is often linked to avoidance of difficult reading by the learners and acquisition of the confidence to improve does not occur. Good attitude and high motivation consequently leads directly to increased understanding and high fluency, whereas negative psychological conditions usually turn out ineffective in facilitating successful reading.

These determining factors are more directly related to the general challenges that second-language learners are facing in reading English. Limited vocabulary is one of the most serious challenges. The knowledge of vocabulary is not only necessary to comprehend this or that word but also the general meaning and the context of the passage. Students with limited vocabulary usually have problems trying to comprehend the sentence properly and thus fail to get the whole text. Moreover, vocabulary knowledge facilitates advanced reading skills including inference, interpretation and making of conclusions. Lacking a strong lexical foundation, learners experience difficulties with word recognition particularly when they have to deal with the unfamiliar or specialized words, and this retards the reading process as well as undermining overall fluency.

The other significant challenge is the arrangement of English sentences especially in writing of academics or high-level writing. Patterns in English sentences can be extremely different in length, grammatical complexity and syntactic structure. Long and complicated sentences, passive structures, and strange word sequence may confuse learners, who are yet to master their linguistic skills. The words that many people find it hard to establish the subject, verb and object of such sentences and therefore they might lose focus in the main thread of thought under consideration. This is even more difficult with the texts containing idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs which in most cases cannot be translated literally. Since these phrases are very contextual and idiomatic, they tend to stop the flow of meaning and break the sequence of thought in a text to the learner.



Such challenges are also compounded by cultural distance. Most English texts are strongly embedded in the specificities of the culture, and students who do not know the cultural allusions, traditions, or principles that are embedded in it might not be able to read this text correctly. Allusions to local customs, historical events, social customs or everyday idioms can be instantly relevant to native readers and unavailable to the second language learner. Such unfamiliarity may cause a misinterpretation or miscomprehension or even loss of interest on the text. This can happen in academic and literary work particularly, where students may come across the concepts and assumptions based on Western cultural constructs, and may be even harder to understand in case the constructs are not familiar with the students. It is therefore necessary to address this cultural gap in order that learners can make a significant engagement with the texts and learn to read more successfully and confidently.

Comprehension in second language reading is one of the most challenging phenomena. It is only understood by use of higher-order thinking processes, where learners are able to single out major concepts, to infer and link various sections of a text to complete messages. This is because most learners pay too much attention to individual words or isolated phrases and in the process end up failing to understand the overall meaning of the text. They can also struggle to detect implied meanings, figurative language, tone and subtext which not only involve knowledge of vocabulary, but also some cultural awareness and skill of interpretation. Subsequently, listeners or readers can perceive the literal meaning of a text but still lose a hidden meaning, purpose, or tone of the text. This is why reading comprehension is one of the most significant issues in the second language acquisition, which presupposes the joint evolution of language knowledge, mental skills, cross-cultural understanding, and psychological preparedness.

4. Best Techniques to enhance reading in English

There are conscious practices that need to be developed to build vocabulary, comprehension and fluency together when developing reading skill in a second language. Contextual learning is one of the most effective methods of vocabulary building. It is important to note that when learners come across new words during a meaningful passage, the more chances of them to deduce the meaning correctly and recall it to use in the future. Context Learning vocabulary out of context means that words are connected with ideas, situations and patterns of use, not the words are memorized on their own. This increases vocabulary development as being more natural and sustainable, as the learner not only has the cognition of what a word denotes, but how the word will operate in a real-life communication.

Vocabulary development can be reinforced by use of visual strategies. Word maps are the tools that allow the learners to structure the information associated with a new word by connecting it to the meaning and synonyms, antonyms, examples, and potential situations where the word can be used. This will help the learner to establish stronger links between new words and what he/she already knows thereby enhancing the ability to remember and recall. Active reading skills like highlighting and underlining as well as making notes are also reinforced in vocabulary building. These methods attract the attention of the learners to significant terms and concepts, encourage the reader to read more carefully and help understand the text and remember it better. Through this an increase in vocabulary can be integrated into the broader process of thoughtful reading and not a mechanical practice.

Reading comprehension is also improved when purposeful reading strategies are used. Learners can preview a big text by looking at titles, headings and illustrations before reading so that they are well prepared. This will enable them to anticipate the probable content and engage what they already know and this will tune them to process the material better. By having some expectations when reading a text, the understanding will be



easier since the reader will have a mental structure on how to arrange the incoming information. It should not be guessed since prediction is a useful strategy that aids learners to read more attentively and in a prepared manner.

Some other effective methods like skimming and scanning also can help in making the process of reading more efficient. Skimming enables the learner to get through a passage swiftly in order to get an idea of the overall meaning whereas scanning assists the learner to get a certain fact or detail. The strategies can be particularly applied in case learners need to process large volumes of information or read in a short span of time. They promote flexibilities in the reading process and direct students to change their reading strategy based on purposes. Meanwhile active reading is also necessary to get a deeper understanding. Asking questions, summarizing the main points and paraphrasing information also demand critical thinking on the part of the learner of what they are reading. This kind of engagement makes reading a less a passive activity, rather an interactive exercise whereby the learner is able to modify, interpret and format the work in ways that are meaningful.

Another very important aspect of the reading ability is fluency, which is acquired via practice. One of the most helpful techniques is reading aloud since it helps to improve the pronunciation, the association between sounds and symbols, and gain confidence. In case of second-language students, they are also assisted by reading aloud since phonological awareness and understanding become related and the process of reading becomes more accurate and faster. It is also important that there is repetition. As the learners read and read the same text more than once, they get to know more about vocabularies, sentence patterns and mean patterns. This practice of exposure lowers the cognitive burden and enables them to read more quickly, more easily and comprehendingly. It is possible that with the increase of fluency, both learners can pay less attention to recognizing words and pay more attention to comprehending ideas.

Another good method of improving reading speed and automaticity is by use of timed reading. This strategy would motivate learners to read in a short time hence enabling them to process the language faster without compromising comprehension. In the long term, timed reading can assist in acquiring fluent reading habits making the learners familiar with the ability to find words and structures quickly and effectively. It drives them to more confidence and more performance as long as the speed is not taken out of proportion as far as one should be able to learn.

An increased difference can also be drawn between extensive and intensive reading that are involved in a varying way in development of reading skill. Extensive reading is reading volumes of material in order to provide pleasure, general knowledge, and exposure in language. This form of reading introduces the learners to various genres, styles, and vocabulary which leads to the gradual development of confidence, fluency, and familiarity with language. Since enjoyment and general sense are the key focuses, extensive reading promotes positive attitude to texts and leads to governing habits of reading.

Intensive reading on the contrary is emphasized on shorter and sometimes harder texts which demand close and serious minding. By reading, learners analyse the information of meaning, vocabulary, grammar, and the structure in a more systematic way. This form of reading is particularly useful to the field of academic development, as it will educate students to engage with accuracy and sophistication. It enhances their skills to comprehend complex language, grasping of nuances, and critical reading of difficult information. Extensive and intensive reading are a great combination, the former engenders breadth, confidence, and fluency, whereas the latter develops depth, accuracy and the analytical power. They have a good basis with vocabulary-building and comprehension strategies which give a good footing to successful reading development in a second language



Working with Technologies and Digital Resources.

Online applications and programs like Duolingo, Lingoda, and Babbel have gained significant popularity as a means of supporting language acquisition (reading). This kind of app provides interactive games, reading resources and quizzes that are based on the learning level of the student. Language learning apps allow the learners to read at their comfort and their time, thus facilitating constant learning as Godwin-Jones (27) notes. eBook, eArticles, eBlogs and other internet materials are an excellent way through which learners can practice reading leisurely. There is a great number of topics and difficulty levels of online materials and it is easy to find reading materials which fit the interests and the level of some learner. Online materials promote independent reading, where the learner is able to access real-world information, which is current and reflects the real-world usage of language.

Interactive Reading Tools Interactive PDFs, audio texts and online discussion forums are computer-based tools that may improve reading comprehension and engagement. These tools can help improve pronunciation, fluency, and listening comprehension at the same time by allowing the learners to listen as they read the text. Online discussion forums offer a collaborative learning experience in which students have the ability to discuss texts with their colleagues and instructors and explain their understanding.

Experimental Analysis

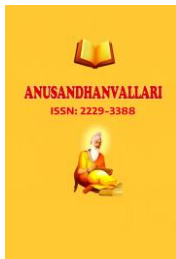
A short training programme has been conducted on five students of Class X testing the improvement in vocabulary, skimming, and scanning reading skills, intensive and extensive reading skills which is depicted in the following table.

Table: Improvement in the Reading Skills of the Learners

Student	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Vocabulary Test Improvement	Skimming Skill	Scanning Skill	Intensive Reading	Extensive Reading	Overall Improvement (%)
A	42	71	Good	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Excellent	69
B	48	74	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Good	Very Good	54
C	39	70	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Excellent	79
D	45	73	Good	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Very Good	62
E	41	72	Very Good	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Excellent	76

The table outlines reading skill development of five students namely, A, B, C, D and E, who completed fifteen days of structured reading training that was based on vocabulary testing, skimming, scanning, intensive reading and extensive reading. An examination of the pre-test and the post-test scoring depicts a significant improvement in all the individuals. Firstly, the pre-test score of the students was between 39 and 48, which means that the students had moderate reading skills. After the training programme, there is an improvement in post-test scores that vary between 70 and 74 and this indicates a significant improvement in the overall reading performance.

The effectiveness of the intervention is also underlined by the percentage of improvement. Student C showed the greatest improvement (79%) followed by Student E (76%), Student A (69%), Student D (62%) and Student B (54%). These advantages imply that the systematic exposure to reading strategies and regular



vocabularies practice had a positive impact on the enhancement of comprehension, reading speed, and fluency. In the table, the performance indicators also reveal that students also achieved significant improvement in the skills of skimming and scanning as this helped them to process texts more effectively and find the necessary information faster. The intensive reading made them comprehend more accurately the complex structuring and meaning of the sentences and the extensive reading made them more confident and familiar with the diversity of vocabulary and text structures.

The analysis shows that even a short training programme that is well structured can result in a drastic change in reading abilities. The use of the strategic reading methods along with practice seems to have enhanced the accuracy and the fluency. This is an indication that even in a constrained time frame, structured reading instruction can bring forth quantifiable and significant improvement in the development of second language reading skill.

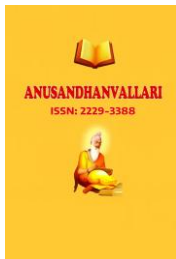
Strategies to Improve Reading of the English Language Learners

One of the prominent strategies is guided reading instructional practice that aims at giving specific assistance to the students as they read books a bit higher than their present level of reading. By such a method, teachers can take students through certain hurdles that they might be experiencing in understanding or reading fluency or vocabulary. In guided reading activities, teachers pick texts that match the ability of the learners, which allows them to gain an in-depth comprehension of the text by closely discussing and scaffolding it. Instructors are able to provide feedback in real-time, demonstrate reading skills, and focus on particular challenges including unknown words or the structure of a complicated sentence. Guided reading assists in making sure that every learner gets the required personalized support to help him become a better reader as his or her progress is closely monitored.

Another strategy is practicing through peer reading and working in groups that are effective teaching methods of encouraging cooperation and improving understanding. These activities will enable students to read in pairs or small groups and which would result in greater engagement and interaction with the text. Peer reading allows students to read aloud and discuss the reading, and has the benefit of giving one another instant feedback and encouragement. Social learning is promoted through peer reading, as the students are able to exchange ideas and meanings and enjoy the different viewpoints of their classmates. Group work, particularly in combination with other tasks, (summarizing, role-playing, questioning) motivates students to solve problems collectively, and gives them an opportunity to process the text deeper. In this way, it creates critical thinking and enables building language and social skills in a positive atmosphere.

Reading journals is another significant method to help students reflect on reading, trace the progress, and develop their comprehension of texts. Keeping a journal, students will be able to summarize main points, write down new words and discuss their personal response to the material. Reading journals enable the learners to internalize what they have read since they are required to actively participate in the text and its content. It can also be a great method of vocabulary strengthening since the learners are advised to take notes on new words and practice them in their sentences. Metacognitive awareness, in which students assess and evaluate their reading strategies and what they can do to improve, can also be promoted by journals. In the long run, journal records are a detailed account of how students have developed as readers and enable teachers to estimate the progress and aspects requiring additional focus.

Differentiated instruction is the practice of accommodating different students with different strategies of reading based on their different abilities. No matter if the students are beginners, intermediate learners, or



advanced readers, the teachers should be able to adjust their approach so that each of the students should be challenged accordingly and able to make a significant progress. It is important to differentiate instruction in order to have an inclusive classroom in which every learner is able to access the resources and support that are required. To a novice reader, this may include the utilization of easier texts with images and a greater amount of assistance whereas the intermediate learner may find a text that challenges them but not one that frustrates them. The advanced learners on the other hand they can be assigned difficult material and the emphasis should be on the critical analysis and high order thinking abilities. Differentiation instruction promotes a more personalized and effective learning process as the needs of the individual learners are considered.

Conclusion

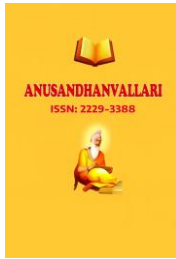
Learning to read is not one that can be learned in a specific amount of time; it is a process in life that is limited to life. According to Grabe (2009), reading should be made a habit and the learners should constantly practise reading to sustain and improve their reading abilities. Lifelong reading is a way of ensuring that learners have fluency and comprehension in the long run, as well as enabling them to have an in-depth grasp of what surrounds them. No matter whether one reads to enjoy, learn, or grow professionally, constant reading will improve vocabulary, sharpening of the mind, and hold learners occupied with novel concepts. Therefore, reading is an art that leads to self-development, intellectual interest, and self-education.

Significant possibilities can be identified in the future research that will delve deeper in the study of creative approaches to the enhancement of English reading skills. With the ongoing technological changes, the impact of artificial intelligence and machine learning of language learning is now gaining significance. As an illustration, artificial intelligence (AI) created reading materials might be offered to learners with texts personalized to their reading abilities, interests, and learning objectives (Godwin-Jones 2011) What is more, the effect of using digital reading tools, i.e. interactive eBooks, on reading interest and comprehension may be investigated in the further research. Adaptive learning technologies integration can also provide the ability to offer new means of delivering specific support to learners so that they could advance their reading skills more effectively.

To conclude, reading is not merely an ability, but a means to knowledge, creativity and self-improvement. Even after an individual is through with language acquisition, reading is something to take as a necessity to personal and professional knowledge. Following the tips provided in this article and reading materials regularly, learners have an opportunity to become stronger in their proficiency of language and help them expand their horizons. Reading is an opportunity to explore the world, especially the cognitive potential and enable the learner to live well in the globally interconnected world. And then let reading be part of the life long, always nourishing mind and soul.

Works Cited

- [1] Anderson, Richard C., and P. David Pearson. "A Schema-Theoretic View of Basic Processes in Reading Comprehension." In *Handbook of Reading Research*, edited by P. David Pearson, Rebecca Barr, Michael L. Kamil, and Peter Mosenthal, Longman, 1984, pp. 255–291.
- [2] Crystal, David. *English as a Global Language*. 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 2003.



-
- [3] Dugaje, Manohar., Pavani, Sasidhar. Online Learning in Virtual Classes -The Learners' Views- A Perspective Study of Virtual Sessions. *Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/ Egyptology*. 17(9). 2020. <https://archives.palarch.nl/index.php/jae/article/view/4215>
- [4] Godwin-Jones, Robert. "Emerging Technologies: Mobile Apps for Language Learning." *Language Learning & Technology*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2011, pp. 2–11. This source is real, but the title in your list needed correction.
- [5] Grabe, William. *Reading in a Second Language: Moving from Theory to Practice*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- [6] Krashen, Stephen D. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Pergamon Press, 1982.
- [7] Nation, I. S. P. *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- [8] Rumelhart, David E. "Toward an Interactive Model of Reading." In *Attention and Performance VI*, edited by S. Dornic, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1977, pp. 573–603.