

College of Education for Humanities

Department of English Language

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Ch 10 Teaching Students to Read for Meaning

1. What does reading include?

Reading includes the process of discovering meaning from printed or written texts within a social context. It is not limited to recognizing words; rather, it is an interactive and cognitive activity that combines **bottom-up processing** and **top-down processing**. Bottom-up processing involves identifying letters, words, phrases, and sentence structures, while top-down processing involves using prior knowledge, experiences, and expectations to interpret meaning. In addition, reading requires the use of various strategies (such as predicting and guessing meaning) and skills (such as skimming and scanning). Therefore, reading is a complex activity where the reader connects what is seen in print with what already exists in their ذهن (mind), and learning occurs when this knowledge is modified through interaction with the text.

2. What is meant by the social context of reading?

The social context of reading means that reading does not occur in isolation but is closely connected to real-life situations and social interactions. People read a wide variety of materials in their daily lives, such as newspapers, emails, menus, street signs, advertisements, textbooks, and even messages on products or clothing. Sometimes reading is done individually, such as reading a newspaper alone, while in other cases it is shared with others, such as reading a menu aloud or discussing movie listings with a friend. Additionally, reading can take place in different physical situations—while sitting, walking, or traveling. This demonstrates that reading serves practical and communicative purposes and is always influenced by the environment and the social needs of the reader.

3. How do readers process what they read?

Readers process texts through the interaction of **bottom-up** and **top-down** processes. Bottom-up processing involves decoding the written language by recognizing orthography (letters), vocabulary, and sentence structure. Readers must also process reading phonology, such as the internal “voice” or intonation when reading silently or aloud. On the other hand, top-down processing involves using background knowledge and contextual understanding to interpret the meaning of the text.

Unlike listening, reading requires visual processing strategies because the input is written rather than spoken. Importantly, research highlighted in the text emphasizes that students improve their reading ability through practice—**they learn to process texts by reading more**. As students read more frequently, they develop a larger vocabulary, gain better understanding of language structures, and acquire more knowledge about the world and different text types. Therefore, extensive exposure to varied reading materials is essential for developing reading proficiency.

4. What strategies do fluent readers use to comprehend texts?

Fluent readers apply a wide range of strategies to understand texts effectively. These strategies include skipping unknown words when necessary, predicting meaning, and guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from context instead of relying on constant translation. They also use cognates, ask for clarification when needed, and rely on their background knowledge about the topic.

In addition, fluent readers draw inferences from titles, analyze sentence structure (syntax) to understand meaning, and use all available information in a paragraph to interpret difficult words. They often read texts that interest them, which increases motivation and comprehension. Visual aids such as pictures and illustrations are also

used to support understanding. Furthermore, they reread texts purposefully to confirm comprehension.

Research on eye movement shows that successful readers read most of the words in a text—about 80% of content words and 40% of function words—demonstrating that they read accurately rather than guessing randomly. They also spend a significant amount of time reading, which contributes to their success.

5. What reading skills do successful readers develop?

Successful readers develop several important reading skills that allow them to approach texts in different ways depending on their purpose:

- **Skimming:** Reading quickly to get the general idea of a text, such as reading headlines and the first paragraphs to understand the topic.
- **Scanning:** Looking quickly for specific information, such as finding a phone number or a detail in a list.
- **Reading for thorough comprehension:** Reading carefully to understand the complete meaning of a text, which is especially important in academic contexts.
- **Critical reading:** Evaluating the text by questioning the author's ideas, arguments, and evidence, and deciding whether to agree or disagree.
- **Extensive reading:** Reading large amounts of material for pleasure or general knowledge, often in areas of personal interest.

These skills work together to make readers more flexible and effective in different reading situations.

6. How do EFL/ESL teachers teach beginners to read?

EFL/ESL teachers help beginners develop reading skills by focusing first on **bottom-up processing abilities**, such as vocabulary knowledge and understanding sentence structure. Beginners need sufficient time and practice to build these foundational skills before they can perform more advanced reading tasks.

Teachers often use specially designed reading texts that contain controlled grammar and vocabulary suitable for beginners. These materials typically include exercises, charts, illustrations, and photos to support comprehension. In addition, teachers design vocabulary-building activities based on students' immediate needs, which makes learning more relevant and effective.

Teachers also create **contextualized reading experiences**, such as pen pal exchanges, where students write and read letters to communicate with others. These letters become meaningful reading materials. Another method is having students create their own stories, which are then transcribed and used as reading texts. Such activities connect reading with real-life communication and increase student engagement.

7. What kinds of reading activities are used with post-beginner students?

For post-beginner students, teachers introduce activities that develop higher-level reading skills:

- **Skimming activities:** Students practice identifying the main idea of texts or selecting appropriate titles after quickly reading passages.
- **Scanning activities:** Students locate specific information in texts such as advertisements, catalogs, or fact sheets, sometimes through competitive group activities.

- **Reading for thorough comprehension:** Students engage in detailed reading tasks, such as predicting content, answering questions, identifying key vocabulary, summarizing paragraphs, and reconstructing texts.

Other activities include drawing story elements, creating new endings, organizing events in sequence, and working in groups to discuss and analyze texts. These activities encourage deeper interaction with reading materials and help students fully understand the content.

8.How is critical reading taught?

Critical reading is taught by guiding students to evaluate and form judgments about what they read. However, before engaging in critical reading, students must first achieve a full understanding of the text. Once comprehension is established, students are encouraged to consider questions such as whether they agree with the author, how their opinions differ, and whether the author's arguments are convincing and supported by strong evidence.

Teachers must carefully select reading materials that are relevant and meaningful to students. When topics are familiar or interesting, students are more likely to engage in critical thinking and express their opinions effectively.

9. What is extensive reading and why is it important?

Extensive reading involves reading large quantities of material that are easy to understand and enjoyable for the learner. Teachers support this by creating a classroom or school library where students can choose from a variety of reading materials based on their interests.

The main goal of extensive reading is to improve reading skills through continuous exposure to language. It helps students develop fluency, expand vocabulary, and build confidence. Teachers often include follow-up activities, such as student interviews or discussions, where learners share their reading experiences. This

approach also promotes learner autonomy, as students take responsibility for selecting and engaging with texts.

10. What is computer-mediated reading?

Computer-mediated reading refers to reading activities conducted through digital technologies such as computers and the Internet. Students can access a wide range of authentic materials, including online newspapers, magazines, and interactive websites.

Technology allows learners to engage in all types of reading activities, such as skimming, scanning, and critical reading. It also promotes independent learning, as students can explore topics of personal interest. Additionally, certain programs can analyze texts to identify frequently used vocabulary, helping students determine whether a text is appropriate for their level. This makes digital tools a valuable resource in modern reading instruction.

11. What problems do EFL/ESL teachers face when teaching reading?

1. The Background Knowledge Problem: Students may struggle to understand texts if they lack prior knowledge about the topic. To address this, teachers use pre-reading activities such as discussions, previews, pictures, videos, or field trips to build background knowledge. These activities prepare students to better comprehend the reading material.

2. The “Getting Students to Read” Problem: Some students are not motivated to read and may not see its value. Teachers can address this by selecting materials that are meaningful and relevant to students’ lives. Observing students’ interests and providing reading materials that match those interests can increase motivation. Extensive reading programs are particularly effective in encouraging students to read voluntarily and develop positive attitudes toward reading.