

## **Effective Strategies and Techniques for Improving Reading skills**

### **الاستراتيجيات والتقنيات الفعالة لتطوير مهارات القراءة**

أ. هبة علي محمد بوزهب - كلية الشريعة والقانون -  
قسم العلاقات الدولية والدبلوماسية - جامعة السيد محمد بن علي السنوسي  
hibah.aboudahab@ius.edu.ly

### **الملخص:**

الهدف من هذا البحث ، هو محاولة لتسليط الضوء عن كيفية تطوير مهارة القراءة لدى الطلبة ، خاصة الطلبة الذين يتعلمون اللغة الانجليزية كلغة ثانية. ولهذا فإن الغرض من هذا البحث هو مساعدة الطلبة في تطوير مستوى القراءة لديهم، وذلك من خلال استعمال استراتيجيات وتقنيات مهارة القراءة.

### **Abstract:**

The objective of this research was an attempt to shed a light on how we can improve the reading skills to the students, especially for second language learners. Reading is one of the most important skills in learning a language. So, the purpose of this research is to help students develop their level of reading, by using major reading techniques and strategies.

### **1. Introduction:**

In the process of English teaching and learning, there are four skills that must be mastered by the learner, there are listening, speaking, writing and reading.

Reading is a complex activity, that involves both perception and thought. Reading is a skill which enables us to get a message, recognizing the written words and understanding the meaning. Reading is one of the most important skills in learning a language, especially for second language learners.

As says that Alyousef (2005) Reading can be seen as an interactive process between a reader and a text. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002, P.9) "Reading is the ability to draw meaning from the oriented page and interpret this information appropriately."

Reading is an essential skill, especially in English as a foreign language. (Carrel, 1993). Reading is an important ability that lets people learn about other people's experience, thoughts and ideas.

There are a number of techniques and strategies that students can use to improve their reading skill.

This research contributes on improving reading techniques and strategies for both teachers and students. The teacher plays an important role in this improvement by using these techniques and strategies in appropriate situations.

Teachers have a major role in this improvement, they also should know how to help students to develop their reading skill by giving them instructions and activities.

### **1.1 The statement of problem:**

This research seeks to discuss the different techniques and strategies of reading skill. Therefore, it becomes important to highlight the relationship between applying reading strategies and techniques and improving of reading comprehension. In order to achieve these goals from this research addressing the following questions:

How can teachers improve reading skill to their students?

What are reading strategies and techniques?

### **1.2 Aims of the study:**

This study will be conducted to achieve the following aims:

1- To highlight the importance of reading techniques and strategies as an essential component of reading process.

2- To assist learners in becoming aware of using these techniques and strategies correctly in the appropriate situations.

3- To help students to read fluency, correct according to their purpose of reading.

4- To enable students to become good readers, if they use these strategies and techniques.

### **1.3 Literature Review:**

Reading is an important ability that lets people learn about other people's experiences. Reading skills have an immense importance in the student success at school (Jarvis,2009). While Brown (2007,p.119) defines

strategies as the "specific methods of approaching a problem or task". Reading is one of the four skills which need to be learned besides listening, speaking and writing. Reading has the considerable role in the language teaching to strengthen the skills which are acquired by the students in listening, speaking and writing.

However, Kose(2006)pointed out that the purpose of reading is to make the invisible layer, the underlying meaning, visible and clear.

To sum up, a good reader is not an easy thing. But S/he needs a lot of works, if students want to be good readers, they need highly proficient and applied reading techniques and strategies correctly. Block and Israel (2005) stated that teachers can help students comprehended through instruction of reading strategies, predicting, making connections, visualizing, inferring, question and summarizing, these strategies can improve reading ability.

#### **1.4 The significance of the study:**

This study provides insights into the teaching and learning reading skill and highlights the role that reading skill plays in language learning.

#### **2. English language skills:**

Language is used to give expression to thoughts and feelings of a social group. Language is a complex skill involving four sub-skills which are follows:

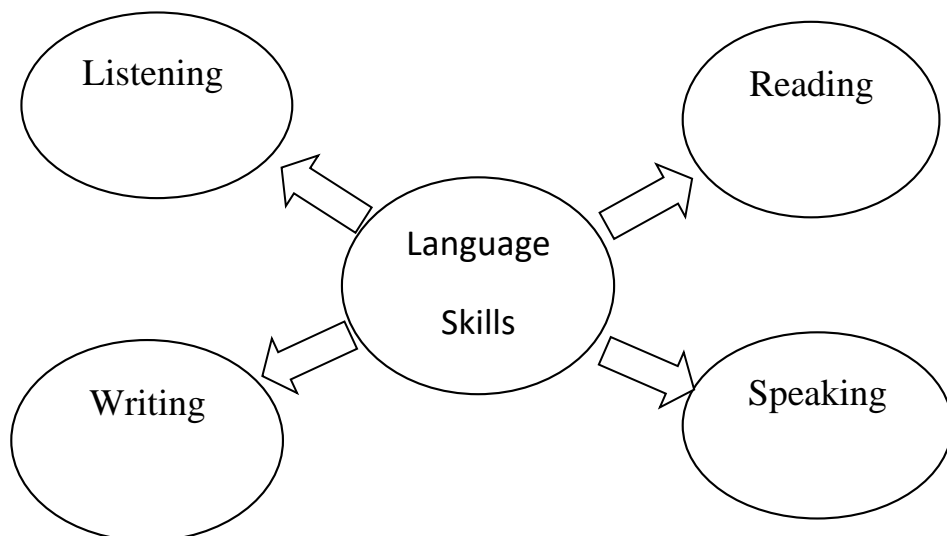


Fig (1) English language skills

These skills classified into two parts: Receptive skills (input) are a term for reading and listening. Productive skills (output) are a term for speaking and writing, skills where students have to produce language themselves.

### **2.1 Reading skill:**

It is a skill which enables us to get a message. Reading is a process involving the following:

**a-Word recognition:** It is the ability of a reader to recognize written words correctly.

**b- Comprehension:**It is the ability to read text, process it and understand its meaning.

**c- Fluency:** It is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly.

There are three stages for teaching reading:

#### **1- Before reading (Pre- Reading):**

In this stage, the reader reads the title, makes a prediction about the topic, scans the text and skims the first and last paragraphs headings to make glance about a text. During this stage the reader connects his/her knowledge to the author's ideas.

#### **2- During Reading (while- reading):**

This stage helps students to focus on aspects of the text, and to understand it better. During reading confirm your predictions by visualizing the story and creating mental pictures about what is you reading.

#### **3- After reading (post- reading):**

This stage helps students to understand texts further, through critically analyzing what they have read, and the students evaluate their understanding of the text.

### **2.2 The purpose of reading:**

Before actually beginning to read, it is important to know the purpose of reading, which is why the reading is being done.

Reading is an activity with a purpose; a person may also read for pleasure and enjoyment or to enhance knowledge and specific information.

According to Grabe and Fredrika (2002), the category of purpose of reading includes readings to search for simple information, reading to learn from text, reading to write, reading to learn from text and reading for general

information. Purposes of reading are not only for students, but also the people in general.

### **2.3 Types of Reading:**

There are four types of reading; these types can be seen as the following:

#### **a- Oral and Silent Reading:**

Reading a text oral or aloud is a vital aspect of English instruction because it is improving pronunciation, oral communication, intonation and enabling learners to gain fluency in the language.

According to Huang (2010), Reading aloud is a significant and magic way to develop students' oral English. On the other hand, silent reading is a significant ability for comprehension. Thus, it can be used during the early stages of studying the language.

#### **b- Extensive and Intensive Reading:**

Extensive reading can be defined as a casual reading. The readers look for fun , easy, interesting and amusing books, so to improve their reading fluency and speed.

According to Bamford et al. (2004), extensive reading is a language teaching tool where learners are expected to read a considerable amount of text for global comprehension.

However, intensive reading can be understood as the reading method which requires intimate study of a text. It is also known as word-by word reading. This type is the most difficult among the other reading strategies. It demands a very high level of concentration, because the students who are using this type of reading, have to read the entire text, word by word, sentence by sentence and each paragraph in the text. Furthermore, Brown (1988) said that intense reading an emphasis on grammatical forms, discourse markers, and the structure of the text.

### **3. Reading Techniques:**

Skimming and scanning are similar in process, but different in purposes. Richard et al. (1992), believe that skimming is used when the reader wants to get the main idea of ideas from a passage. On the other hand, Great (1981), believes that the scanning is a type of reading techniques and that is used to locate specific information without reading the entire text by looking at the title, table of context, figures or symbols.

### **3.1 Skimming:**

In skimming readers read very fast and often skipping words, sentences or paragraphs that are not important.

There are steps to skim a text, and they are:

- a- Identify what the text is about.
- b- Identify the main idea of the text.
- c- Concentrating on the topic sentences in each paragraph.
- d- Decide how useful the text is for your purposes.
- e- Read the first and last paragraph.
- f- Read any headings and sub-headings.
- g- Read the summary.

There is another form of skimming when you are reading a book in order to decide how useful it is for purposes. In this situation you might also look at one or more of the following:

- a- Contents page.
- b- Foreword.
- c- Index.
- d- Information about the author and publication details.

### **3.2 Scanning:**

When you are scanning a text, you already know the form of the words or symbols you are looking for. Scanning means finding words or other symbols such as figures. When you are scanning a text, you normally focus on small parts of the text only which have particular importance for you.

There are steps to scan a text, and they are:

- a- State the specific information you are looking for.
- b- Using headings that will help you identify which sections might contain the information you are looking for.

Students should notice that they do not have to read the whole text while scanning. It is time-saving if a student is busy, or has a lot of information to look for through different texts.

## **4. Reading Strategies:**

Reading is a process of decoding information from a text. Reading strategies involve the students' ability to read and understand the word, phrases, sentences and other symbols or figures in a text.

There are specific strategies that are associated with effective and successful reading. The main strategies the readers will be looking at are:

#### **4.1 Predicting:**

In this strategy the readers using what they already know about the topic, what they want to learn about the topic. In order to be good reader, students should set a goal for their readings, therefore, a good reader have a purpose for reading.

In this strategy, the students have another key to understand a text. They predict at specific points through the text, evaluate the prediction and revise predictions if necessary (Teele, 2004).

#### **4.2 Inferring:**

Obtaining meaning from the text that the writer has not explicitly stated. It refers to reading between the lines. Students need to use their own knowledge along with information from the text to draw their own conclusions (Serafini, 2004).

#### **4.3 Dealing with unfamiliar words:**

When students find words, they do not understand in a text, the reader needs to decide first whether it is really necessary to understand the word. Perhaps the students can understands enough of the text without understanding the word.

#### **4.4 Identifying the main ideas:**

In this stage, the reader understands the writer's main points. Students who can use this strategy will be able to locate the topic sentence, or by understanding the title of the text. However, with more difficult texts it may be possible to identify the main ideas after more detailed reading.

#### **4.5 Summarizing:**

The process of summarization requires the reader to determine what is important when reading and change this information in the readers own words.

During summarizing process, the students will be able to distinguish the main ideas from the supporting ideas. This strategy is sufficient for stages of high schools.

#### **4.6 Questioning:**

Readers can use the questions before reading. The questioning process requires readers to ask questions of themselves to construct meaning, enhance understanding, find information and discover new information (Harvey and Goudvis, 2000). In this strategy, the students return to the text throughout the reading process to answer the questions that the teachers asked before, during and after the reading of the passage.

#### **4.7 Visualizing:**

Visualization requires the reader to construct an image of what is read and teachers can motivate students to write or draw the image that come to their minds after visualizing the text.

#### **4.8 Search reading:**

Search reading requires readers to quick finding ideas which are particularly important for them.

#### **4.9 Making connections:**

In this strategy the students can activate their prior knowledge and connect the ideas in the text to their own experiences.

Reading becomes easy and meaningful when the readers connect the ideas in the text to their own experiences and beliefs.

### **5 Role of the teachers on improving reading skill:**

The role of the teacher is to be responsive to the vast and varied needs of each student, and to promote an educational climate that facilitates motivation and the desire to read.

Teachers can apply many roles in the way of teaching reading. The teacher chooses suitable texts and activities to develop students' reading skill. This indicates that the teacher is a director, S/he gives directions before, during and after reading a text.

Before the students start reading, the teacher should guide students to ask themselves some questions in order to help them know what they will read such as the type of the text, writer purpose, why and what they are reading and how they will read a text.

In this stage, the teacher should be ready as resources for the students when they need any information about the text.



## **6 Reading activities:**

Teachers should start to determine the level of their students by giving them easy tasks during reading a text.

There are many activities, teachers can use before, during and after reading any sentences, passages, texts, or books according to the student's age.

### **a- Before reading (Pre-reading) activities:**

While doing pre-reading exercises the students should see all the tasks before reading the text. The following questions may be used:

Can you guess what the text is about from the title of the text?

What do I already know?

What more do I want to know?

Pre-reading can be done by some activities, those are:

a- Using cards or pictures and ask students some questions that are relate to the text.

b- Guessing or complete the title from the pictures.

In this stage, the teacher encourages students to read stories with lots of expressions in order to capture the attention of the children.

In pre-reading exercises the teacher writes the students guessing on the board and then read the text to prove if their guesses were true or false.

### **b- During (while reading) exercises:**

The students should scan the text to get the information. Teachers ask the students to read first and last sentences or paragraph to guess what the text is about, or what the general idea of the topic.

During the activity, it can be done with several activities those are:

a- Completing a table.

b- Making a list.

c- Taking notes.

d- Ask simple Wh-questions.

The teacher can divided the students into groups; each group gives questions to another group to make the work more competitive and interesting especially for shy students.

### **c- After( post-reading) exercises:**

The students should sum up the content of the text by their own words and use their imagination to complete the story.

Teachers give their students a chance to write a summary from the notes that the students write in their notebooks , and using their own words.

During this activity, the students do the task which is given by the teacher, while S/he monitors and checks the group

**Conclusion:**

This research may have concluded that, applying reading strategies and techniques can improve students' reading skills.

In a nutshell good reading skill depends on both the teacher and students. Both should do their roles effectively, by using the information in this research, which may be hopeful to make learning and teaching reading skill easier and effective. When a teacher applies the previous techniques and strategies carefully, his /her students learn how to use them in different texts Finally, good teacher helps students to learn to read and read to learn.

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