TEACHING READING AND WRITING SKILLS TO PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL STUDENTS

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Abstract

In this article there was revealed the skills for pre-intermediate level English learners. Here there was discussed about how to make reading and writing skills shorter and easier for learning. The reason is that many English language learners face a very big problem in the writing part. In this research there was discussed basic knowledge on how to quickly understand and smooth the translation in the reading sections. Reading is important because it develops mind and gives excessive knowledge and lessons of life. It helps you understand the world around you better and keeps your mind active, enhances creative ability. Reading improves vocabulary and develops communication skills, while writing is important in its own right; the evidence clearly shows that writing supports reading and reading development. They also are vital ways of improving reading skills overall. Reading and writing are academic skills, to be sure. It is a process of organizing ideas and creativity through text. It is useful for all skill levels, from children to published authors, to develop an authentic, creative work. It breaks the act of writing into manageable steps that can be taken over a period of time, rather than all at once. Readers need a conclusion to remind them of essay's main points and give a feeling of closure to the essay. A strong conclusion: sums up the main point of your paper. Ends with a "takeaway" for readers: what lesson can be learned from your main point, or what should be done in the future? When the words are understood and transcend the pages to become thoughts and ideas then you are truly reading. Comprehension therefore is the capacity for understanding those thoughts and ideas. Conclusions that do not summarize often don't sound like conclusions. Readers expect that a writer will sum up at the beginning of a conclusion, at least for a sentence or two, and may not recognize a conclusion that doesn't open this way. Also, summarizing the main point reminds readers of the most important ideas in the essay as it comes to an end. These guide strategies are useful for all English language learners. However, by following these tips, pre-intermediate students will feel that their reading and writing skills have increased significantly.

Keywords: reading skill, writing skill, academic skills, pre-intermediate level, intensive and extensive reading,

1. INTRODUCTION

There are four language skills which need to be achieved in order to complete communication. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Actually, all of the English skills are important, but reading and writing skills are the most important for effective communication in a literate society. The human brain was created about 60,000 years ago and the alphabetic code only about 5,000 years ago. No brain system was created specifically for reading or writing skills and both skills needed to use and rely on a variety of brain systems. Despite this, about 75% of the literate population can read properly while about 25% have reading difficulties and impairments. There is virtually no systematic teaching of reading and writing skills at higher levels of education. Consequently, learners suffer in developing these skills at advanced stage. Therefore, in this unit we have made an attempt to present the basic concept and nature of reading and various stages in

the process of reading. As the learner moves from lower to higher stages of reading, his/her critical and creative levels of comprehension improve a lot, which helps in developing divergent and convergent thinking. Various skills and techniques of reading help the learners as active consumers of information. Skills of skimming and scanning, intensive and extensive reading help the readers to benefit from various forms of reading materials at higher levels. Recent researches on writing have provided us with an important insight: good writers go through certain processes which lead to successful pieces of written work. They plan the intent and put their thought in an appropriate language and style. The final draft is prepared through reviewing and editing. Writing skills for different types of written forms differ in its approach and style. These skills could be developed and sharpened by constant practice of reading and writing varied forms and formats of written material.

2. IMPORTANCE AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF TEACHING READING AND WRITING SKILLS

2.1. Peculiarities of Teaching Writing

Writing is a complex communicative activity. It helps to communicate in the written form with the help of graphical symbols. Writing is a type of speech activity as "a communicative skill to encode, store and send messages with the help of written symbols". The product of this type of speech activity is a text for reading. Writing techniques and activities can be characterized as controlled (for providing the content and form), guided (as free but a form is given) and free. (Controlled writing proposes using the following activities: coping, gap-filling, re-ordering words, substituting, correcting the facts and dictation (Abbs & Freebie, 1982, pp.55-59).

Writing involves content, organization, style, syntax, mechanics, grammar and spelling. It was pointed out that "If we limit our feedback to pointing out or correcting errors, our pupils will concentrate on producing error-free writing, neglecting the interest or even the meaning of the content. The equation teaching writing error elimination is counterproductive" (Blankenship & Craig, 2011, pp.194-205). So, it is necessary to conduct feedback in fair balance of content feedback and form feedback.

There are different types of writing performance in English which should be assessed. Imitative: at this stage, form is the primary concern to assess learner's skills in the fundamental and basic tasks of writing letters, words, punctuation, and very brief sentences. This category also includes the ability to spell correctly and to perceive phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the English spelling system.

Intensive: this refers to producing appropriate vocabulary within a context, collocations and idioms, and correct grammatical features up to the length of a sentence. Responsive: assessment tasks here require learners to perform at a limited discourse level, connecting sentences into a paragraph and creating a logically connected sequence of two or three paragraphs. Form-focused attention is mostly at the discourse level, with a strong emphasis on context and meaning.

Extensive writing implies successful management of all the processes and strategies of writing for all purposes, up to the length of an essay, a term paper, a major research project report, or even a thesis. Students focus on achieving a purpose, organizing and developing ideas logically, using details to support or illustrate ideas, demonstrating syntactic and lexical variety, and in many cases, engaging in the process of multiple drafts to achieve a final product.

The experienced teachers consider that teachers should ignore the language mistakes that do not hinder learning, so teachers may correct only those mistakes which are very basic and those which affect meaning.

Helping the students to concentrate on particular aspects of language, we can tell them that a piece of work will be corrected for only one thing, the use of tenses, for instance. By doing this, we ensure that their work will not be covered by red marks, and we encourage them to focus on particular aspects of written language. We can individualize language work by identifying for each student a few kinds of errors and assigning that focus on these (Bondarevskaya, 2000, pp.8-9).

Where a piece of writing contains a number of common errors, we may photocopy the work (erasing the writer's name) and show it to the whole class, asking them to identify problems. In this way the attention of the class can be drawn to common mistakes and photocopied document can form the basis for remedial work.

We will learn about our pupils' errors if we give them the opportunity to make them, fix them, and discuss them. We can ask our pupils to discuss where they think their mistakes come from and why they make them. This will help us to realize which mistakes the pupils can recognize and which ones they cannot. Asking the

pre-intermediate level students to discuss their mistakes may provide us with wide information about interference, typical mistakes, usage of skills and give us clear evidence of language learning. A piece of writing (for instance, essay) as a final work at advanced level can be evaluated on the basis of criteria:

1) Task achievement: relevance and appropriateness of ideas and examples, coverage, variety, suitability of the text, type and length, awareness of target reader, precision;

2) Organization: cohesion, coherence sequencing, paragraphing, layout and punctuation, length/complexity of sentence, textual fluency:

3) Range: structures, vocabulary, appropriateness, flexibility, detail, avoidance of repetition;

4) Accuracy: grammar, vocabulary, spelling.

2.2. Peculiarities of Teaching Reading

Reading is one of the main skills that a pupil must acquire in the process of mastering a foreign language in school. Reading is about understanding written texts. It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought. Reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. Comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text. Readers typically make use of background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with text and other strategies to help them understand written text. (Bowers, 1963, pp.88-95) Through reading in a foreign language, the pupil enriches his knowledge, of the world around him. He gets acquainted with the coun-tries where the target language is spoken.

Reading develops pupils' intelligence. It helps to devel-op their memory, will, imagination. Pupils become accus-tomed to working with books, which in its turn facilitates unaided practice in further reading.

Teaching reading is very important, because it has to develop other skills: speaking and writing. Literally any periodical or textural reference to reading either states or implies that the major function of reading is to communicate to listeners by voice the thoughts and feelings of a writer. The author usually proceeds to explain how reading should be taught to carry out that mission.

The fact that a substantial number of teachers either do not accept the above purpose as the reason for teaching reading, or, if they do, fail to see its implications, was indicated recently in an analyst of the responses of over 800 teachers to statements dealing with oral reading found in the Inventory of Teacher Knowledge of Reading which had been administrated as part of an extensive in service education program. On this instrument, 37 percent indicated that the major justification for reading instruction was to stress precision in word perception. In an item asking for a choice among possible reasons why a teacher would have children take turns reading portions of a story sequentially, 47 percent, or almost one half, marked as the one desired saying it gives all children the opportunity to practice word recognition skills.

Reading is one of the main skills that a pupil must acquire in the process of mastering a foreign language to pre-intermediate level students. The syllabus for foreign languages lists reading as one of the lead-ing language activities to be developed. It runs: "To read, without a dictionary, texts containing familiar grammar ma-terial and no more than 4-6 unfamiliar words per 100 words of the text the meaning of which, as a rule, should be clear from the context or familiar word-building elements (in the elementary level). Pupils are to read, with the help of a dictionary, easy texts containing familiar grammar material and 6-8 unfamiliar words per 100 words of the text (in the pre-intermediate level)" (Carroll, Ryan, 2005, pp.1-3). Therefore, reading is one of the practical aims of teaching a foreign language to pre-intermediate level students.

Reading is of great educational importance, as reading is a means of communication, people get information they need from books, journals, magazines, newspapers, etc. Through reading in a foreign language, the pupil enriches his knowledge, of the world around him. He gets acquainted with the coun-tries where the target language is spoken.

Reading develops pupils' intelligence. It helps to devel-op their memory, will, imagination. Pupils become accus-tomed to working with books, which in its turn facilitates unaided practice in further reading. The content of texts, their ideological and political spirit influence pupils. We must develop in pupils such qualities as honesty, devotion to and love for our people and the working people of other countries, the texts our pupils are to read must meet these requirements. Reading ability is, therefore, not only of great practical, but educational, and social impor-tance, too.

Reading is not only an aim in itself; it is also a means of learning a foreign language. When reading a text,

the pupil reviews sounds and letters, vocabulary and grammar, memorizes the spelling of words, the meaning of words and word combinations, he also reviews grammar and, in this way, he perfects his command of the target language. The more the pupil reads, the better his retention of the linguistic material is. If the teacher instructs his pupils in good reading and they can read with sufficient fluency and complete comprehension he helps them to acquire speaking and writing skills as well.

3. BASICS OF DEVELOPING READING AND WRITING SKILLS

3.1. Developing Reading Skill

Reading extensively inside and outside classrooms helps to improve the learners' reading skills. When preparing a lesson plan, teachers need to think that learners want various skills at different ages and competency levels. Teachers should use learner-related contexts whenever possible, as this will help them motivate students to read. Some of your learners have complained that reading is boring and they do not want to read the texts you have given them - what should you do? Choose the same types of texts that learners enjoy reading outside the classroom and design motivating pre-reading and post-reading tasks to go with them. They would probably enjoy doing the reading task as they are acquainted with it already. After relieving their boredom, you could introduce academic reading comprehension, poetry or prose.

Basically, reading can be of two types: extensive and intensive, and the idea is to impart some skills needed for both. Teaching reading skills could be easy when taught with nuances and strategies with continuous practice. Reading skills become boring for many when they are not given the correct strategies. In a classroom structure, students use reading for different purposes; it may be instructions, to do lists, course books, blogs, websites, newspapers and magazines. Here the question is how to develop their reading skill in the above structure? There are six strategies to be taught to the students for enhancing their reading capabilities in different contexts. The below six techniques are step by step procedures essential for effective reading: (Jeremy, 2007, pp.15-18)

Prediction - Prediction is a preparation task by guessing the genre of the text before reading it. Use titles, subtitles and pictures to find out what the text is broadly about (using also previous knowledge and experience). The teacher could set up preparation tasks by setting up general questions to get acquainted with the lesson or passage to be worked with.

Skimming - Skimming is a fast reading process to get the general information of a passage. During skimming, ask your students to underline the nouns, starters and conjunctions in order to make it easy to pick out the general idea and concepts.

Scanning - Scanning is done for grabbing the specific information of the passage. Here the students ought to be taught the nuances of picking up specific information to underline the text for picking up dates, years, names, important vocabulary etc. You read your marked highlights in the text to search for your answers. For example, If your learners are reading a museum website just in order to find out how much the entrance fee is, they could use this scanning strategy.

Cohesive devices - Look for connectors and starters like 'on the other hand',' in spite' and 'even though', where the writer wants to take the text in a different direction.

Guessing the meaning of vocabulary - Having read an article, your intermediate-level learners have found some words that they don't understand. In this situation, ask learners to think about the linguistic context of each word. Ask them to use the words or vocabulary before and after the text to get clues about the meaning of new words.

Intensive Reading - You take time to read a text carefully to find out the authors perspective, to search for abstract concepts, to find out hidden answers, and to synthesize the text as a whole. This type of reading comes easily after constant practice of all the above strategies put together.

3.2. Developing Writing Skill

When you prepare writing activities, consider how to make them as meaningful as possible. You can do this by thinking about audience, context and purpose. This could be a task for young learners, such as writing a story, or for adult learners writing about their ambitions. Very often in the classroom, it's easy to ask learners to do a task from the syllabus or course book without thinking about the above three. Try making it a regular feature of any writing task in future - that you identify context, purpose and audience before they begin the task. You could identify them all together, or learners could even decide themselves. Whichever way you try, it should make the writing more meaningful:

1. Writing can be fun - consider topics your learners enjoy.

2. Writing sometimes needs a lot of planning, and sometimes none at all.

3. Learners need opportunities to write freely without worrying about accuracy.

4. Writing can be varied - there are many different kinds of writing!

Generally, to develop fluency in writing the writer has to concentrate and practice the various skills as follows:

Planning ideas logically **-** Planning carefully helps learners arrange text in a logical sequence, that flows well and is easy to read. The beginning should feel like the start of a text that gets readers interested. Each 'piece' of text should lead naturally into the next one. And of course, the end should feel like it finishes it all.

Writing accurately **-** When writing is done concisely, it means the most effective words are being used. Writers often fill sentences with words that are poor choices and can be removed or replaced. By getting feedback, editing and revisiting their writing after a day or two, learners can develop skills to notice words that shouldn't be in the text.

Paragraphing **-** Using paragraphs effectively helps readers follow a piece of writing. In general, each paragraph should have its own idea. A big block of text without paragraphs can leave readers confused and annoyed. If sentences are thrown together without linking words or phrases, the paragraphs are difficult to read. As sentences need to be linked within paragraphs, paragraphs also need to be linked. When a reader moves from one paragraph to another, if the link is not obvious, words and phrases can be used to help with the transition.

There are many types of activities such as grammar, vocabulary, coherence and cohesion in framing sentences that you can do to help learners work on writing skills. Some activities may focus on the accuracy of their language, and some on helping them to communicate the meaning. Others may focus on the writing process itself - learning how to start a writing task, how to draft, edit and review it.

4. PREPARING PRE-IELTS READING AND WRITING SKILLS

4.1. Successive Enhancement of Bio Stages Reading Skills (Strategies to Help Students)

Teachers know that students who struggle with fluency can experience a variety of difficulties. They may, for example, ignore punctuation and read slowly in a monotone voice, or they may read in choppy start-and-stop rhythms. Often, such readers also have difficulty monitoring understanding and self-correcting. There are specific strategies you can use to differentiate instruction to help your students overcome these problems (Choudhury, 2011, pp. 33-40). For example:

- If students are reading slowly and in a monotone voice, have them increase their rate and add dramatic expression.

- If students are reading too fast without pausing for punctuation, have them slow down and pause appropriately to reflect punctuation.

- If students are reading accurately and at the right speed but without expression, have them vary their voice to communicate the character, plot, and tone of the text.

- If students are reading without stopping to self-correct miscues, teach them self-monitoring and word recognition strategies to self-correct.

- If students are reading without understanding, model think aloud, showing them how to draw on textual information and prior knowledge.

4.2. Technology's Role

A variety of technology tools can support your students' development of fluency skills. Tools with audio and video recording capabilities and digital texts with embedded supports can support students with learning disabilities and struggling students. Audiobooks, e-books, and your own live readings are especially helpful. (Noonan, 1989, pp.373-374) Considering the following three stages of conducting reading language skill to students/learners, teachers can combine technological tools with reading tasks in the following ways to make the class as much productive as it can be:

4.2.1. "Before Reading"

- Display a PowerPoint of the repeated reading strategy.

- Have students reflect on fluency progress to set the stage for repeated reading.

- Take note of the different ways in which students feel they are improving.

- Introduce the repeated reading strategy.

- Model the repeated reading strategy.

- Self-assess the first reading of the text.

- Model it a second time, showing improvement in reading.

- Evaluate progress with the students.

4.2.2. "During Reading"

- Provide directions for student practice.

- Have students repeat read with a partner or on their own.

- Monitor students' performance and provide individualized assistance.

4.2.3. "After Reading"

- Guide a discussion on fluency progress, prompting for rate, accuracy, and expression comments.

- Project a document to take notes on student reflection on performance.

- Ask for connections to comprehension.

4.3. APPEAL TO THE SENSES

While reading process is the work of the mind, incorporating the senses provides extra reinforcement for students who are still growing their skills. Reading passages aloud and verbalizing questions you would mentally ask while reading can be a great benefit to students. Students often have no idea how to ask questions, what type of questions to ask, or the frequency of questions, so modeling this skill is invaluable. This can be further reinforced especially for visual learners by using a document camera or overhead projector to write questions, mark key words and phrases, and interact with a text. And as always, encourage students to read with a pen or pencil in hand (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.44).

4.4. Guide Students in Setting Reading Goals

While writing goals are used regularly in the classroom, students do not assess personal reading skills on a regular basis. Begin the year by having students write a reader's biography to gain insight into their reading habits, struggles, and successes; this serves as a foundation for discussions on setting reading goals. After reading a novel, nonfiction text, short story, or poetry unit, help students evaluate their reading skills: Did you feel confident reading the text? Why or why not? What parts of the text gave you trouble? Could you have used a different strategy to make reading the text easier? Students should evaluate goals on a regular basis and create new goals based on their needs and growth. (Noonan, 2004, pp.255-260)

4.5. Vary Text Length

When approaching a particularly difficult text, break it up and offer it in shorter segments. Students often become discouraged with lengthy texts that require intense concentration. Giving smaller segments allows the students to digest chunks in pieces, acquire academic vocabulary, and build confidence. (Richards, Bohlen, 2011, p.25)

5. EASY LEARNING OF WRITING SKILLS

5.1. General Helpful Strategies for Writing Acquisition

View the improvement of students is an essential tool for learning a discipline and helping students improve their writing skills is a responsibility for all faculty. For this, the following strategies can be the best appropriate for the students to allow them to acquire the writing skill with the greatest pleasure and the highest interest (Willis, 1996, pp.37-38):

- Let students know that you value good writing.

- Stress the importance of clear, thoughtful writing. Faculty who tell students that good writing will be rewarded and poor writing will be penalized receive better essays than instructors who don't make such demands. In the syllabus, on the first day, and throughout the term, remind students that they must make their best effort in expressing themselves on paper. Back up your statements with comments on early assignments that show you really mean it, and your students will respond.

- Regularly assign brief writing exercises in your classes.

- To vary the pace of a lecture course, ask students to write a few minutes during class. Some mixture of in-class writing, outside writing assignments, and exams with open-ended questions will give students the practice they need to improve their skills.

- Provide guidance throughout the writing process.

- After you have made the assignment, discuss the value of outlines and notes, explain how to select and narrow a topic, and critique the first draft, define plagiarism as well.

- Don't feel as though you have to read and grade every piece of your students' writing.

- Ask students to analyze each other's work during class, or ask them to critique their work in small groups. Students will learn that they are writing in order to think more clearly, not obtain a grade. Keep in mind, you can collect students' papers and skim their work.

- Find other faculty members who are trying to use writing more effectively in their courses.

- Pool ideas about ways in which writing can help students learn more about the subject matter. See if there is sufficient interest in your discipline to warrant drawing up guidelines. Students welcome handouts that give them specific instructions on how to write papers for a particular course or in a particular subject area.

6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that I have highlighted the skills for pre-intermediate level English learners. In conclusion, I wrote about how to make reading and writing skills shorter and easier to learn. The reason is that many English language learners face a very big problem in the writing part. I shared my basic knowledge on how to quickly understand and smooth the translation in the reading sections. I also want to help solve these problems in our country. Reading is important because it develops your mind and gives you excessive knowledge and lessons of life. It helps you understand the world around you better. It keeps your mind active and enhances your creative ability. Reading improves your vocabulary and develops your communication skills. While writing is important in its own right, the evidence clearly shows that writing supports reading and reading development. They also are vital ways of improving your reading skills overall. Reading and writing are academic skills, to be sure. They are also success skills for life, at large. It is a process of organizing ideas and creativity through text. It is useful for all skill levels, from children to published authors, to develop an authentic, creative work. It breaks the act of writing into manageable steps that can be taken over a period of time, rather than all at once. Readers need a conclusion to remind them of your essay's main points and give a feeling of closure to the essay. A strong conclusion: sums up the main point of your paper ends with a "takeaway" for readers: what lesson can be learned from your main point, or what should be done in the future. When the words are understood and transcend the pages to become thoughts and ideas then you are truly reading. Comprehension therefore is the capacity for understanding those thoughts and ideas. Applying what you have read and understood becomes the successful conclusion. In other words, because you're trying to end your piece, you don't want to start making new claims or sharing new research. Instead, you'll want to help readers see how they relate to your subject matter. The more you read and write, the more you broaden your vocabulary and are able to articulate concepts accurately and more effectively to others. Increasing your ability to communicate also helps make you a better worker or student. Don't forget to summarize the main point. Conclusions that do not summarize often don't sound like conclusions. Readers expect that a writer will sum up at the beginning of a conclusion, at least for a sentence or two, and may not recognize a conclusion that doesn't open this way. Also, summarizing the main point reminds readers of the most important ideas in the essay as it comes to an end. So, I think these guide strategies are useful for all English language learners. However, by following these tips, pre-intermediate students will feel that their reading and writing skills have increased significantly.

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