

Strategies for Developing Reading Skills

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Annotation:

Language instructors are often frustrated by the fact that students do not automatically transfer the strategies they use when reading in their native language to reading in a language they are learning. Instead, they seem to think reading means starting at the beginning and going word by word, stopping to look up every unknown vocabulary item, until they reach the end. When they do this, students are relying exclusively on their linguistic knowledge, a bottom-up strategy. One of the most important functions of the language instructor, then, is to help students move past this idea and use top down strategies they do in their native language.

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Effective language instructors show students how they can adjust their reading behavior to deal with a variety of situation, types of input, and reading purposes. They help students develop a set of reading strategies to each reading situation.

Strategies that can help students read more quickly and effectively include:

- Previewing: previewing titles, section heading, photo captions o get a sense of the content of a reading selection.

- Predicting: using knowledge of the subject matter to make predictions about content and vocabulary and check comprehension; using knowledge of the text type and purpose to make prediction about discourse structure; using knowledge about the author to make predictions about writing style, vocabulary and content.

- Skimming and scanning: using a quick survey of the text to get the main idea, identify text structure confirm or question predictions.

- Guessing from context using prior knowledge of the subject and the ideas of the text as clues to the meanings of unknown words, instead of stopping to look them up.

- Paraphrasing: stopping at the end of the section to check comprehension by restating the information and ideas in the text.

Instructors can help students learn when and how to use reading strategies in several ways:

- By modeling time the strategies aloud, talking through the processes of previewing, predicting, skimming and scanning, and paraphrasing. This shows students how the strategies work and how much they can know about a text before they begin to read word by word.

- By allowing time in class for group and individual previewing and predicting activities as preparation for in-class or out-of-class reading. Allocating class time to these activities inductance their importance and value.

- By using cloze exercises to review vocabulary items. This helps students learn to guess meaning from context.

- By encouraging students to talk about what strategies they think will have them approach a reading assignment, and then talking after reading about what strategies they actually used. This helps students develop flexibility in their choice of strategies.

When language learners use reading strategies, they find that they can control the reading experiences, and they gain confidence in their ability to read the language.

The first step in study reading is to preview, to figure out what it is that you are going to be reading. Read the title, all the subtitles and any boldfaced text. Read the instruction or the first paragraph. Look at any pictures, charts, graphs or diagrams and accompanying captions. Read any question at the end of the chapter, and read the summary or the last paragraph. Think about what are going to be and what the meaning ideas is likely to be. Also, consider whether you already know something about this subject. The whole process of previewing should take no more than 5 minutes. Still, these short steps will give you a pretty good idea of what the text is going to be about. By a “pretty good idea”, we mean 10-20 per cent comprehension of the chapter and may be more-depending on what you already know about it to begin with. Skimming is one of the tools you can use to read more in less time. Skimming refers to looking on for the general or main ideas and works best with non-fiction (or factual) material. With skimming, your overall understanding is reduced because you don’t read everything. You read only what is important to your purpose. Skimming takes place while reading and allows you to look for details in addition to the main ideas. If while skimming you feels you are grasping the main ideas, than you are skimming correctly. Skimming is done at a fast speed with less-than-normal comprehension; you shouldn’t skim all the time. There are many times, however, when skimming is very useful. Skimming will help you locate the information quickly while making sure you use your time wisely. It will also increase the amount of as able material you obtain for your research. Scanning, a useful strategy of quick reading is when you look through a reading passage quickly in order to find a piece of information that you want such as dates, names, numbers and others. After you are previewing, skimmed, carefully read and taken notes on the material, you have almost 95 per cent comprehension. And you have completed the first two steps of the process. The third step –SUMMIRISING- is crucial one. As you read, summarize the material in your mind. Restate the content in your own words. Make the material briefer, more distinct. Make it your own. As your carry out this mental process you are not only gathering the information but also processing it into material you can more easily learn. Add your summaries to your class notes. For students, developing their reading strategies help them independently, silently and fluently

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