IMPROVING READING SKILL FOR A2 LEVEL LEARNERS AT SCHOOL

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Annotation: The article discusses about reading skill in a classroom and relationship between reading comprehension and its improvement.

Key words: reading instruction, comprehension of a text, stages of reading skill, direct and indirect instruction.

Learning to read is one of the central rites of passage in our society. It separates young children from the world of older children and adults. At a general level, the development of reading skills can viewed as occurring in five stages (Chall,1979).

The age boundaries are approximate and do not apply to every child-for instance, some children learn to read quite fluently before they go to school. However, the stages convey general developments in reading and about when they usually occur.

In this stage, development of reading skills lasts from birth to the beginning of first grade. Children master several prerequisites for reading. Some of children learn to identify the letters of alphabet, quite a few be able to write their names (more or less correctly) and some of them learn to read a few words written on signs.

Next stage children acquire the ability to sound out words when they are in first and second grade. They also complete their learning of letter names and sounds during this stage.

Third stage; children learn to retrieve individual words and to read somewhat more fluently. Nevertheless, at this stage, reading is still not used much for learning.

In fourth through eighth grade, children become increasingly able to obtain new information from print. According to Chall: "In the primary grades children learn to read, in the higher grades, they read to learn".

The last stage comes to high school years. They become fully competent readers. Their ability to understand material told from many perspectives makes possible much more sophisticated discussions of literary works, as well as discussions of history, economics, and politics, than previously.

To be in control of reading instruction, educators must know what to teach and why they are teaching it. This article describes the overall goal of reading instruction and how this goal must be dominant in the curriculum. Then it defines reading, describes the reading curriculum and its relationship to writing, and provides a rationale for the reading curricular goals. So what is curriculum itself?

Curriculum is a description of what to teach. In this case, we are concerned about what to teach to develop genuine literacy. The curriculum focuses on the wholeness of the reading and writing curriculum. This wholeness includes three stages.

First, the curriculum should be whole in the sense that, what is taught in the context of the pursuit of meaningful activity. Consequently, it becomes as a part of an authentic activity in which students are controlling or enriching their lives. By always teaching reading and writing in this context, we are assured that students experience being literate.

Second, the curriculum should be whole in the sense that language is message-sending-the function is communication. For communication to occur, there must be someone to send a message and someone to receive it. If a message is not worth sending or not interesting to the receiver, there is little communication. In consequence, instruction is whole in which involves all the language skills- reading, listening speaking, and writing.

Third, the curriculum should be whole in the sense that the component parts of language- where skills and strategies remain subordinate to the function of language as message-sending and receiving in the pursuit of one's life.

The main purpose of reading instruction is to teach learners to eagerly engage in literate activities using both recreational text and functional text. Reading instruction reflects the following: [1]

- Reading instruction should be integrated in natural ways with other language skills such as; listening, speaking,, and writing.
- Students' reading and writing should always involve message.
- Reading instruction should develop students who eagerly read all kinds of written text.

Instruction is intentional, goal directed and it is a conscious attempt to modify another's understanding in a specified way, with the intention of producing specific curricular outcomes.

Instruction is characterized by five properties: expectation, caring, situating, informing, and mediating student construction of meaning.[3]

Expectation is one of the strongest influences on learning. If someone expects much of you, you tend to rise to that level. In contrast, if someone does not expect

much of you, you tend to do less well. This concept refers to the tendency of humans to perform at an expected level.

- Teachers must genuinely care about their students. As students are not passive participants in learning. They have their own feelings and they have already known conceptions about what is being taught.
- The next characteristics of instruction is situating. Teachers are referring students to take part in a social situation where they are learning something because they are going to use immediately.
- Forth property of instruction is information giving. Students can receive information directly, while doing some tasks or activities, that teachers show exactly how to do a task.
- The last property of instruction is mediating. When the students receive some information through their mind and they reconstruct and restructure the information. Students mediate what happens during instruction.

As we have discussed above the characteristics of reading instruction. This is not the way instruction has always been viewed. People used to think of instruction as a single cycle in which teacher "poured" into students' minds. Teacher must allow students time to express their understanding of instruction.

Instruction can be direct, indirect, or combination of both. Direct instruction occurs when teachers present an academic task to students. For example, a mother is teaching a baby to at a new word "Daddy" and a teacher teaching a student to read a printed word "Daddy". These are examples of direct instruction. Indirect instruction occurs when academic tasks are put in activities in classroom environment. In order to lead students to achieve desired goal.

Direct instruction. Teachers who instruct directly play a structured and active role. They provide information to students directly and expect to respond students. It is one of the greatest opportunity of getting understanding of students mind. With the help of direct instruction teacher could see how students restructured the task. Successful direct instruction depends as much on your spontaneous elaborations as on your initial presentation of information.

Indirect instruction. This instruction depends more on classroom activities than on teacher talk. The activities themselves provide the information, shaping students' interpretations of the task and leading them to discover the intended instructional goal. Advantage of this approach is that student interest and motivation increase with independent pursuit of activities.

Comprehension is the goal of all communication. In productive skills, comprehension means understanding the message well enough to formulate it clearly. [3] In receptive skills, comprehension means interpreting the message accurately enough to understand its meaning. Consequently, reading instruction focuses on

getting meaning from the text; while writing instruction focuses on creating meaning in text.

In recent years, researchers have increasingly turned to the question of how reading comprehension can be improved. One method that has proved to be important is to ensure that children understand the background assumptions of stories before they read them. That is, they must have the relevant content knowledge. Providing relevant background knowledge that addresses likely misconceptions can enhance comprehension of stories.

One of the things that makes reading difficult to teach is the fact that students in one class can represent several levels of developmental reading growth, background experiences, cultures, motivation, and interests. To deal with individual differences, reading groups are sometimes formed, so that students with similar needs are taught together.[2]

Some reading instruction occurs in large group settings. However, small reading groups are found in virtually all elementary classrooms because students vary so much in their reading levels. For example: In a third grade class which includes 20 students, reading levels will normally range from beginning reading to upper grade reading. If you try to teach all 20 children in one large group, advanced readers will get bored and lose interest, while low-leveled readers will get frustrated and lose interest. Consequently, the whole class will lose their motivation and positive attitude to reading subject. When students are categorized by level, however, each group receives instruction at an appropriate level. Having various kinds of reading groups means that you must decide how to assign students to each kind of groups. Students are assessed by reading level groups they do not necessarily stay in it all year. It depends on students' progress, individual students may be moved to a higher or a lower level. To make decisions about when to change a students' reading group, teachers routinely collect data about the student's progress.

Effective teaching is associated with vital teachers who make their own decisions and, maintain control of their instruction. Reading instruction requires more than drilling, asking for them right answers, and demanding that directions are followed accurately. That requires is a teacher who adapts instructional materials by making appropriate decisions- a teacher who is in control of instruction and can modify it in ways that put students in control of their reading.

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