

EXTENSIVE READING HABITS THROUGH SEQUENTIAL READING EXERCISES-A PROVEN METHODOLOGY

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Reading is a way of getting information from something that is written. Reading involves recognising the symbols that make up a language. Reading and hearing are the two most common ways to get information. Information gained from reading can include entertainment, especially when reading fiction or humor. Reading has been the skill most emphasized in traditional FL teaching, and even today is the mainstay of EFL instruction in many countries. In Japan, for example, English instruction at the university level is usually the "intensive reading procedure," which implies close study of short passages, including syntactic, semantic, and lexical analyses and translation into the L1 to study meaning.

As Alderson and Urquhart (1984) have argued, is not a reading but a language lesson: Such a pedagogic practice--of focusing on the language of a text--may be justified as a language lesson, but it may very well be counterproductive as a *reading* lesson. Often what is known as "intensive reading" (as traditionally opposed to "extensive reading") is actually not reading at all: the lesson consists of a series of language points, using texts as points of departure. Reading texts, in other words, are sources of language exercises, rather than reading exercises (pp 246-247) from teaching texts to teaching readers. Specifically, we now teach learners reading skills/strategies for understanding such elements as content, textual features, rhetorical elements, and cultural background. "Skills building" emphasizes skills/strategies for text comprehension. This has been the mainstay of L1 reading instruction in the United States, and ESL/EFL reading textbooks with words like "skills" or "strategies" in their titles are now common. Further, there has been much research on skills-based teaching procedures, including basic skills (finding the main idea, skimming, inferencing) and advanced skills (schema-building, metacognitive skills).

Although extensive reading is now recognized as an important element of language instruction, it appears that today's students specializing in business studies do little reading in English beyond course requirements. A negative correlation was found instead between the number of years of past English study and reading attitude. These findings are useful for defining appropriate instructional actions and identifying areas for further research, with the aim of more effectively promoting extensive reading in

English. Several analogies have been used to describe reading. It has been compared to a battle because a reader selects strategies to “attack” a text; victory is won when the text “surrenders,” or yields meaning. It has been compared to marching; both activities require you to move purposefully and rapidly towards a destination. It has been compared to solving a puzzle; it requires a reader to draw on all of his or her background knowledge and focus on the textual cues to work out the meaning. Reading can also be like a pleasurable stroll, especially when you are reading literature. You stop by words and expressions to appreciate their beauty, and notice how they contribute to making your journey worthwhile. And it has even been compared to peeling an onion. A reader has to skim off the surface, working through layers of meaning to reach the core. These analogies highlight the different characteristics or processes involved in reading: it is rapid, purposeful, flexible, interactive and evaluative, and it involves comprehending and learning.

There is no cheaper or more effective way to develop learner autonomy. Reading is, by its very nature, a private, individual activity. It can be done anywhere, at any time of day. Readers can start and stop at will, and read at the speed they are comfortable with. They can visualize and interpret what they read in their own way. They can ask themselves questions (explicit or implicit), notice things about the language, or simply let the story carry them along. Students who are introduced to books early are more prone to develop their language skills, and are in turn usually better in reading comprehension compared to children who are non-readers or reluctant readers. The more they read, the more they gain in language ability and reading comprehension. Reading thus provides opportunities for students to develop cognitively and linguistically. One of the fundamental responsibilities of teachers is therefore teaching their students to read. Indubitably, the future success of all students hinges upon their ability to become proficient readers

Reading is the most readily available form of comprehensible input, especially in places where there is hardly any contact with the target language. If carefully chosen to suit learners’ level, it offers them repeated encounters with language items they have already met. This helps them to consolidate what they already know and to extend it. There is no way any learner will meet new language enough times to learn it in the limited number of hours in class. The only reliable way to learn a language is through massive and repeated exposure to it in context: precisely what ER provides. In ways we so far do not fully understand, the benefits of ER extend beyond reading. There is a spread of effect from reading competence to other language skills writing, speaking and control over syntax. The same phenomenon is noted by Day and Bamford but they even note evidence of improvements in the spoken language. So reading copiously seems to benefit all language skills, not just reading.

Many, if not most, students have a rather limited experience and knowledge of the world they inhabit both cognitively and affectively. ER opens windows on the world seen through different eyes. Vocabulary is not learned by a single exposure. ER allows for multiple encounters with words and phrases in context thus making possible the progressive accretion of meanings to them. By presenting items in context, it also makes the deduction of meaning of unknown items easier. There is a well-established link between reading and writing. Basically, the more we read, the better we write. Exactly how this happens is still not understood but the fact that it happens is well-documented. Commonsense would indicate that as we meet more language, more often, through reading, our language acquisition mechanism is primed to produce it in writing or speech when it is needed.

The virtuous circle - success leading to success - ensures that, as we read successfully in the foreign language, so we are encouraged to read more. The effect on self-esteem and motivation of reading one's first book in the foreign language is undeniable. This is called as a 'home run' book : 'my first'! This relates back to the point at the beginning of the need to find 'compelling', not merely interesting, reading material. It is this that fuels the compulsion to read the next Harry Potter. It also explains the relatively new trend in graded readers toward original and more compelling subject matter.

Research Methodology

Students who enroll into college for their Bachelor's Degree in Tamil Nadu are from various backgrounds. These Backgrounds may be classified as

- Socio-Economical
- Cultural
- Medium of Instruction

Both socioeconomic status and intelligence have direct effects on planning on college, college attendance, and college graduation, and considerable indirect effect on the level of educational attainment through their effects on college plans and college attendance. However, for females the relative effect of socioeconomic status on college plans, college attendance, and college graduation was greater than was the effect of intelligence, while for males the relative effect of intelligence at each of these stages was greater than the effect of socioeconomic status. When only those who attended college were included in the analysis, intelligence was more important than was socioeconomic status, for both sexes, in determining who eventually graduated from college. But socioeconomic status continued to influence college graduation--even after socioeconomic selection had played its part in determining who would attend college. Similarly Cultural differences have a main role to play in their college studies just as

socio-economic status. The last and the important one being the medium of Instruction ,in Tamil Nadu .The classification is simply stated as 1)Tamil and 2)English medium, depending on their medium of Instruction in schools

As a part of the testing mechanism

The research methodology involved a two year consistent ‘training to read’ sessions to a select number of students. Their level of comprehension was tested with worksheets (as enclosed with the Interim).The final result was arrived at, based on their levels of comprehension. It was found that more than 60% of students were able to read level 3 books, which would initially have not been possible for them.

Expert opinion

The project would not have been fruitful but for the Expert Advice obtained from the respective advisors. The opinions about the working of the project was sought after the project report was submitted to each one of the expert. Based on their opinion the following improvisations were made in the final draft and the recommendations were

- Reading Newspapers aloud, listening to Rhymes and short stories
- TED Talks, Film Shows
- Playing English songs, Tongue Twisters
- Speed reading
- Improving Eye span
- Training in silent reading
- Review reading
- Set weekly goal in reading
- Make reading as personal interest
- Reading room setup
- Class room discussions on reading
- Quality Time

Conclusion

The study has thus proved that reading habits in English can be wrought into students immaterial of their medium of study, through definite and continuous reading procedures.

References

Formatted Expert opinion from the Subject Experts.

1. Alderson, J.C., & Urquhart, A.H. (1984). Postscript on Hosenfeld. In J.C. Alderson & A.H. Urquhart (Eds.), *Reading in a Foreign Language* (pp. 245-249). New York: Longman.