THE IMPACT OF EFFECTIVE READING STRATEGIES ON THE L2 LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT: Reading is a cognitive activity. It requires a thinking process. It is one of the four basic language skills. It is essential to develop all the skills. However, reading is a part of the input resource required to perform the output skills like speaking and writing skills. Hence the reading skills cannot be ignored if one wants to be competent in communication skills. Reading is an important activity that provides materials for better communication. This research paper delineates the importance of reading for the L2 learners of English and how they face challenging tasks while reading. The paper further suggests strategies to develop reading skills among L2 learners. Various techniques are being used by the language experts to induce interest among the students to carry out the reading habits. The paper foregrounds that Academic reading, reading research works, reading for pleasure, reading to obtain knowledge, critical reading, cloze reading, speed reading and comprehension are the important reading activities to be reinforced among the students. The curriculum should be developed in such a way as to include all the reading strategies relevant for the L2 learners to enhance their reading skills.

KEYWORDS: Cognitive process, critical reading, comprehension, cloze reading, speed reading.

1. INTRODUCTION
Reading is one of the most important basic language skills to be acquired if anyone wants to enhance language proficiency. The English language has a very complex vocabulary system as many of the words have been borrowed from languages such as Greek, Latin, French and other European and some Asian languages including Hindi and Tamil. There is a lot of difference between the literal meaning and the contextual meaning of a word. In this case, reading extensively and intensively help to comprehend the contextual meaning. Reading helps to build a vocabulary base and makes listening and writing easy.

2. READING PROCESS
Reading is a cognitive process that involves a negotiation between the text and the reader. There are three stages of reading. They are pre-reading, during reading and after reading activities. The pre-reading process prepares the students for serious reading. The background knowledge, preview of the text, and the purpose of reading are the serious process involved in this pre-reading. The students should list the ideas or information that occurs in the mind while reading the title of the passage provided to read. The second stage of reading involves prediction and revision of the prediction and confirming during the reading. It is a continuous process. The final stage of reading involves understanding, discussing, analysing and judging the meaning of the text. Taking notes, writing the summary and comparing with other texts are the activities occurring after reading.

3. METHODOLOGY
This is qualitative and descriptive research as it highlights the challenges faced during reading by the L2 learners and offers effective strategies to overcome the challenges. The research supports this paper with qualitative research articles, books, and other research works.

4. LITERATURE REVIEWS
Julian Hermida., in the research article, "The Importance of Teaching Academic Reading Skills in First-Year University Courses" describes that the success of university students depend on their academic reading skills. Most of the students fail in academic reading skills as they take a surface reading approach instead of deep reading approach. The students have to be motivated and trained in a deep reading approach to strengthening their academic reading skills (2009).

K.M. Roebl& Connie Shiue, in "Developing Reading Comprehension Skills in EFL University Level Students", state that students are able to read fluently but they don't understand fully what they read. Comprehension skills are necessary to understand the text and the context of the material being read. Reading is

viewed as a dynamic process and the interactive approach is to be developed to enhance the reading skills of university students.

EmhemmadMasoudAlbeckay, in "Developing Reading Skills through Critical Reading Programme amongst Undergraduate EFL Students in Libya" states that by developing an innovative critical reading programme, comprehensive reading skills can be enhanced. Critical reading is explained as reading with an appreciative sense of what is written (2013).

Rebecca J. Baier, in the research paper "Reading Comprehension and Reading Strategies" states that with the help of comprehension strategies. The university students who were not trained through the self-questioning reading strategy, have been found lacking in understanding the reading texts whereas the students who went through the self-questioning reading strategy did their reading tasks very well (2005). HayatiAkyol, in the research article "A Study on the Development of Reading Skills of the Students Having Difficulty in Reading: Enrichment Reading Program" states that with the aid of an enrichment reading programme, difficulty in reading can be overcome. Practice and assessment in word recognition, aloud reading and reading comprehension were used in the enrichment reading programme. The tests were both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Creating a conducive reading environment and the implementation of an enrichment reading programme can enhance the reading skills of the students immensely (2014).

DjaberNacerBouhedjam. in his project titled "Importance of Reading Activity in Education" mentions that reading activity is connected with the development of literacy and civilization. The author referring UNESCO says that if the students are not able to read when they are young, they will find difficulty in understanding when they become adults. He also explains the purpose and benefits of having regular reading activity in educational institutions (2015).

Sarah Rutzler in the blog writing "Importance of Reading Comprehension" describes that reading comprehension is different from the act of reading. Reading requires the parsing and blending of phonetic sounds to make up the words. Reading comprehension demands thinking about the meaning of the text as an individual and as a whole thing. Comprehension is the ability to read, process and recall the meaning of what is being read. Comprehension helps to understand scientific theories, philosophical ideas, political ideas, historical facts, legal documents, etc. (2020).

Julie Coiro, in the research paper "Online Reading Comprehension: Challenges and Opportunities" explains that offline reading is different from online reading. Reading texts on the internet requires certain processes or skills. She foregrounds four skills that are vital for sustainable online reading. They are proficient in digital literacy skills, digital wisdom to pursue learning through internet sources, digital culture to become familiar with the internet community and become part of it, and a positive attitude towards using the internet for academic learning. Online reading helps the students to participate in the reading activity in a real and virtual world outside the classroom (2014). Mohammed Aedh A. in the thesis, titled *An Exploration of Reading Comprehension*, narrates the challenges of reading comprehension by the university students learning English as a foreign language. Little attention to the punctuation, using the ineffective method of reading such as repetition and guessing, mingled with the tradition and culture, poor teaching methods, and the lack of background knowledge hamper the comprehensive skills of reading (2014).

5. IMPORTANCE OF READING
Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counsellors, and the most patient of teachers. - Charles W. Eliot

Reading has become the part and parcel of everyday life. Reading for acquiring general knowledge about various domains in newspapers and social media is a routine to everyone including the common citizen. Reading is performed with the binary function of pleasure and information. Books are the best and the wisest friend and they need to be read. Reading skills are essential to students as they have to master the curriculum, communication and other language skills. Balamurugan says, "Practically language proficiency glorifies its accuracy through continuous practice." It can be fun for the children and induce their imagination and make them creative and innovative. Students who have regular reading habits, perform better in reading comprehension tests, develop a broader repository of vocabulary, have better general knowledge and understand the cultures of different countries better than the students who do not have the reading habit. Reading for pleasure is significant to bring about a change in social background.

Comprehensive Reading Skills
Reading comprehension is the prominent reading activity practised in all levels of education in our country. It is a healthy sign. It involves reading to obtain information, facts, figures, and data. Reading an informative passage from a magazine or a newspaper, guide book, a catalogue, menu, chart, timetable, etc., are the source of comprehensive reading. It is an easy job and requires less mental thinking process.

Critical Reading

Critical reading means making a mental judgement in response to the reading of a particular text. It involves the mental process of understanding the text and analysing the reason behind the text and responding to them critically. It requires reading between the lines. The texts have more meaning than the actual words written. The reader has to understand all these implications of the text provided for reading. Critical reading involves more contextual meaning than literal meaning. Contextual meaning is more important in critical reading. For example paraphrasing, a poem, interpreting a novel or a play requires critical reading. These texts are to be understood given the situation when it was written and published. They have to be judged on what pattern or genre is written. Critical reading is serious reading. Hence it requires not only understanding the concepts but also the context.

Extensive Reading

Extensive reading means a whole lot of reading done outside the academic activity. It is the reading for entertainment or pleasure or just for widening one's horizon of knowledge. Reading the best-selling novels, editorials, reviews, opinion pages can be extensive reading. Extensive reading helps to become proficient in the usage of language. It also helps to increase one's creativity, kindles the imagination and stimulates innovation. After reading the books of motivation, many have become successful in their endeavour.

Intensive Reading

Intensive reading requires more concentration and reading even between lines. Every word in the text must be read and understood minutely. The casual or carefree reading would lead to disaster. Textbook, legal, documented works come under intensive reading. Every textbook has been prepared by the subject experts after doing extensive research. Therefore, they have to be read clearly and carefully to understand the meaning appropriately.

Challenges Faced while Reading

Reading is one of the language skills to be learned and trained. It becomes difficult if the students are not properly trained or drilled to do so. However, there are challenges to reading skills like the other skills. It has more challenges than other skills as its process involves decoding, retaining and interpreting. The most challenging barriers to effective reading are the attention components, variation in retention of memory, linguistic and non-linguistic issues, concept formation and word decoding. It is not always easy to focus one's attention while reading. It may be due to various reasons like the lack of attention towards the reading text, short term memory, linguistic and non-linguistic issues, decoding the text, insufficient understanding of the difference between syntax and semantics, concept formation and problem-solving. Kulalalmolial says, "Teachers of English language were asked to teach not only linguistic competence but also sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence."

These barriers should be addressed at the earliest to make the students competent in sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence through reading. Teachers and trainers should make use of the various techniques suitable for the students to overcome the reading challenges they face. There are a few strategies suggested in this paper to overcome the difficulties they face while practising the reading skills.

Strategies to Enhance Reading Skills

Skimming and scanning are the methods used traditionally to develop reading comprehension. Scanning helps to find out the specific information whereas skimming is used to get the main features of the text read. Scanning is useful while reading newspapers, magazines and internet resources wanting to find out the specific information relevant. Skimming is very handy for the research work. It helps to choose from various contents. Speed reading is another technique used nowadays to enhance fast reading. A normal person can read 400 words per minute, speed reading could help him to read 800 words per minute if practised regularly.

Strategy to strengthen Critical Reading

Critical reading can be introduced at the intermediate level. Short fiction, graphic novels, lyrics could be adopted in the syllabus. They not only need less mental activity but also enjoy the reading. Students should be encouraged to write their comments even the interpretation might not be accurate. Credits should be provided for the comments. Subha and Nagarani mention "Active participation plays a vital role in refining the learner skills, increasing the level of confidence and grooming one's personality." If the whole book is difficult to read, a few pages from a short novel could be given for reading but the active participation should be ensured. This reading activity should be repeated every term so that the students become competent in critical reading.

Strategy to develop Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is practised minimal for the L2 learners as for as the present curriculum is concerned. Extensive reading, unfortunately, falls under contents beyond the syllabus getting less focus from the students as well as the teachers. However, it should be the other way around. Students should be encouraged and motivated to read books outside the syllabus and they should be awarded special or extra credit if they have done extensive reading satisfactorily.

Strategy to develop Intensive Reading
Through intensive reading is given importance in the curriculum, enough time required is not provided unfortunately leading the students to by-heart and vomit during the tests. Healthy and fair methodologies should be followed to measure the intensive reading of the subjects. Open book reading can be one of the best methods that will help the students to do the intensive reading.

6. CONCLUSION
Reading is a cognitive activity that requires a mental process of recognition and retention. As it is an important language skill, it has to be enhanced to become an effective communicator. This paper suggests a few strategies that can help to enhance L2 learners' reading skills. Reading should become a habit. It has to be on the daily menu. Continuous practice of reading with the aid of various techniques suggested in the paper will certainly yield a good result. This research paper highlights theoretical perspectives and provides strategies to develop reading skills.

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