

The Importance of Using the Three Stages in Teaching Reading

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This article examines the importance of using three different stages in teaching any reading text. These stages are the pre-reading stage, the while-reading stage, and the post-reading stage. The article also presents and describes each stage with its own characteristics and clarifies how they are related to one another. Furthermore, it provides examples and techniques for each stage, and illustrates how these examples and techniques can help encourage critical thinking and increase comprehension and improve easy retention. Finally, this article provides a sample lesson plan to take the reader through the stages in teaching reading and presents the reader an approach of how to implement these stages in an effective way.

Introduction

After being exposed to and teaching the reading module, I have concluded that the pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading stages are very important when teaching any reading text. Each of these stages has its own characteristics, although they are related to one another. That is, the pre-reading stage leads to the while-reading stage and finally to the post-reading one. Going through all the three stages respectively, the reader gets a better understanding of any text s/he has already tackled and ultimately becomes responsible for his/her own learning. Penny Ur defines reading as follows:

“Reading means ‘reading and understanding.’ A foreign language learner who says, ‘I can read the words but I don’t know what they mean’ is not, therefore, reading, in this sense. He or she is merely decoding-translating written symbols into corresponding sounds.” (1996: 138)

The Pre-Reading Stage:

To enable our students to understand a reading text, without their looking up every single word, we, as teachers, should employ the pre-reading stage, as it is important in building confidence and creating security within the

learners before they approach a reading text. To create confidence and security within our learners, we should activate their background knowledge and schema in regards to the target text.

This can be achieved through describing pictures, generating words that have relation with the topic, listing words on the board and having the students use them to make up a story, or showing the students pictures related to the text and having them tell the story. These kinds of activities prepare the students for the task (reading) and familiarize them with the topic of the reading exercise. Also, they help the students to create expectations and arouse their interest in the subject matter of the written text.

Harmer clarifies this by saying:

“We will not get students to interact properly with spoken and written materials unless we ensure that their desire to read or listen has been awakened. Especially where the subject matter of the texts may not be immediately appealing to them we have the responsibility to make students interested and to encourage them to tackle the text with positive anticipation.” (1991: 188)

In conclusion, the pre-reading stage helps to make the next stages of reading more easily adaptable for the reader. As the reader progresses along the necessary reading stages, more skills begin to develop. Therefore, this stage is very important to orient students to any new material they don't know, to activate schema for previous knowledge of a topic, and to help motivate students. Also, without the pre-reading stage, the task (while-reading) might be more difficult and progressively less enjoyable. As a result, the reader may struggle and may withdraw from reading.

The While-Reading Stage:

The reading or the while-reading stage could be approached in different ways.

For example, Richards sees reading “as an integration of top-down processes that utilize background knowledge and schema, as well as bottom-up processes that are primarily text or data driven.” (1990: 87) I believe that our role in the classroom as second language teachers should be to encourage and stimulate for our students in regards to the use of the two processes, top-down and bottom-up, when they actually tackle any text. Our students, on the one hand, might be asked to treat the text as a whole to get the general picture without being too concerned with the details, i.e., skimming the text to pick out main points rapidly. On the other hand, they might be asked to look at a text and extract specific information, i.e., scanning the text to find out a fact that they are interested in or asked for. Thus, whether one skims or scans depends on the purpose and the goals of the reader.

In conclusion, the reading activities which we might use range from reading for the pure sake of reading, silent reading, to more focused reading where the students learn to skim for the main idea, scan for the secondary categories, or read intensively for the supporting ideas. I believe this helps to encourage critical thinking and increases comprehension and easy retention.

The Post-Reading Stage:

To check our students’ comprehension and retention of the information of a text that they have already tackled, we should employ the last stage- the post-reading stage. In this stage, the students’ focus might be more on a detailed analysis of the text. That is, they might answer comprehension questions, such as Who? What? Where? When? and How?, explain the writer’s attitude, work with vocabulary through context, or draw a picture related to the text. Also, it is very important to have the students share and discuss different ideas related to the reading text.

Through working in pairs or groups to discuss the reading text, the students might gain insights from each other that may or may not change their perspective on a given thought. Moreover, a follow-up writing assignment may be helpful for the students to reflect further on the reading and will also help us as teachers to assess the comprehension and retention of the students.

In conclusion, following and implementing the aforementioned stages and insights would help our students to depend on themselves and on other resources, rather than on us as the primary source of information. This is where students initiative/interaction comes into play. They start developing skills by themselves, which later become their own skills through interaction with the reading text. That is, our goal should ultimately be to help encourage critical thinking and increase comprehension and easy retention.

The following lesson plan “Peter’s Beach” clarifies and illustrates the implementation of the aforementioned insights and stages (pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading) in the learning-teaching environment.

The Reading Passage

PETER'S BEACH

In front of the house there was a beach. Peter liked to stretch on the sand when the sun was warming it. From the back door of the house he would walk along a path as far as the sand, and stand at the water's edge looking at the sea. When nothing very interesting was happening on the water, he would go down on his knees and take a handful of sand. Through his fingers ran the sand till only small stones and shells were left. Then with a large sweep of his arm and with as much strength as he could muster Peter would throw them away as far as he could.

At other times he would go on his back and gaze up at the clouds, his hands idly searching the sand at his sides. He never stopped playing with the sand and feeling it run through his fingers, however much he was absorbed by the changes in the clouds.

Occasionally some fishing boats came close enough to the beach for Peter to see what the fishermen were doing. Then with his hands clasped he would look and look, while his whole body moved with the boat from side to side. When the fishermen drew in their nets or cast them into the water, Peter would do the same with an imaginary net of his own from his place on the beach.

On the small beach Peter had a world of his own.

Peter's Beach Lesson Plan

From: Paul Levasseur

PRE-READING

1. Put BEACH on the board. Ask Sts for images and vocabulary stimulated by the word. Do a map of these as Sts speak.
2. Chat about Sts own experience at the beach. What's the best beach you have ever been to? What color was the sand? What were the people doing? What made it special? Etc.

3. List key vocabulary from Peter's Beach. Are any of these words unfamiliar? These are the words from the piece you are to read. What do you think the piece is about?

sun sand beach house water sea stones
shellthrow clouds fishing boats men nets
imaginary Peter

WHILE-READING

1. Pass out story. Sts read story silently once.
2. Turn stories over and with a partner reconstruct the story, as much as you can remember.
3. Re-read the story. Clear up any questions or disagreements you had about the text.
4. Sts tell me the story. I act it out with rods.
5. Is there any critical vocabulary that you still don't understand?
6. Sts read one more time, silently.

POST-READING (Alternatives)

1. Ask for details of Sts' images of Peter's Beach:

What did Peter look like? hair color? height/weight? age?
family?

loner? shy? friendly?

Why was Peter at the beach? summer vacation? summer
house? permanent home? New England? America? cold?
hot?

What did the house look like? empty? crowded?
expensive? sheltered?

2. Write a description of one aspect of the story.
3. Draw the scene. Draw your feelings about the scene, then write about them.
4. Write the next chapter of the story.

Write your own beach story.

Write Peter's Beach in your own words.

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תקציר

המאמר הזה בודק חשיבות השימוש בשלושת שלבי הוראת הקריאה והן : טרום קריאה , תוך קריאה ולאחר הקריאה , הוא גם מציג ומתאר כל שלב עם הדגשת מאפייניו עם הדגש לרמת הסינרגיות בין אותם השלבים בנוסף לכך הוא מעשיר כל שלב בדוגמאות וטכניקות ומבהיר את סיוען של הדוגמאות והטכניקות לחשיבה ביקורתית , ומגביר רמת הבנת הנקרא והשפעתו על רמת היציבות של הלמידה של אותו חומר , ובסוף המאמר מוצג מערך שיעור מבהיר לכל התהליך של הקריאה שתקנה מיומנות שימוש אפקטיבית לקורא.

تلخيص

المقال يفحص استعمال ثلاثة مراحل مختلفة في تعليم أي نص في فهم المقروء، هذه المراحل هي : ما قبل القراءة، خلال القراءة، وما بعد القراءة. وأيضاً يعرض ويصف المقال كل مرحلة بمزاياها الخاصة بها ويوضح العلاقة بينها. زد على ذلك، فإن المقال يزود القارئ بأمثلة واستراتيجيات عن كل مرحلة، وهذه بدورها تساعد على تشجيع التفكير النقدي، وتزيد من الفهم وتحسين الاستيعاب السهل. وأخيراً فإن المقال يزود القارئ أيضاً بدرس نموذجي وبدوره يبين للقارئ المراحل الثلاثة وطيفية تطبيقها بطريقة ناجحة.