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MODERN APPROACHES TO TEACHING READING SKILLS

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Abstract. *This article examines the significance of texts in the process of teaching foreign languages to students of non-philological specializations. It emphasizes that texts serve not only as linguistic material but also as an effective pedagogical tool that helps develop students' professional and communicative competence. The study explores how authentic and professionally-oriented texts contribute to students' mastery of specialized terminology, grammatical structures, and reading strategies necessary for understanding field-specific content. The paper also discusses the psychological and cognitive aspects of text perception, highlighting the importance of motivation, background knowledge, and interest in effective foreign language learning. Special attention is given to selecting texts that meet students' academic needs, age, and specialization to foster meaningful and goal-oriented language acquisition.*

Keywords: *foreign language teaching, non-philological students, authentic texts, text-based instruction, professional competence, terminology acquisition, reading strategies, motivation, ESP (English for Specific Purposes), cognitive approach*

Introduction. Traditionally, the purpose of learning to read in a language has been to have access to the literature written in that language. In language instruction, reading materials have traditionally been chosen from literary texts that represent "higher" forms of culture. This approach assumes that students learn to read a language by studying its vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, not by actually reading it. In this approach, lower level learners read only sentences and paragraphs generated by textbook writers and instructors. The reading of authentic materials is limited to the works of great authors and reserved for upper level students who have developed the language skills needed to read them.

The communicative approach to language teaching has given instructors a different understanding of the role of reading in the language classroom and the types of texts that can be used in instruction. When the goal of instruction is communicative competence, everyday materials such as train schedules, newspaper articles, and travel and tourism

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websites become appropriate classroom materials, because reading them is one way communicative competence is developed. Instruction in reading and reading practice thus become essential parts of language teaching at every level.

Reader knowledge, skills, and strategies include:

- Linguistic competence: the ability to recognize the elements of the writing system; knowledge of vocabulary; knowledge of how words are structured into sentences
- Discourse competence: knowledge of discourse markers and how they connect parts of the text to one another
- Sociolinguistic competence: knowledge about different types of texts and their usual structure and content
- Strategic competence: the ability to use top-down strategies as well as knowledge of the language (a bottom-up strategy)

The purpose(s) for reading and the type of text determine the specific knowledge, skills, and strategies that readers need to apply to achieve comprehension. Reading comprehension is thus much more than decoding. Reading comprehension results when the reader knows which skills and strategies are appropriate for the type of text, and understands how to apply them to accomplish the reading purpose.

Recent research emphasizes that effective reading instruction should integrate metacognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating comprehension, which significantly influence learners' autonomy and success in academic contexts [9].

Different suggestions were offered by linguists. For instance, F.L. Stoller, N.J. Anderson, and W. Grabe differentiated 5 steps in teaching reading skills in their article *Instructional Enhancements to Improve Students' Reading Abilities* (2013). They were: extensive practice and exposure to print, commitment to building student motivation, attention to reading fluency, vocabulary building, comprehension skills practice and discussion.

According to Ur (1996), reading is not just a receptive skill but an interactive process that requires engaging learners in meaning-focused tasks [11]. Similarly, Brown (2001) emphasizes that encouraging learner interaction with texts through summarizing, questioning, and reflecting supports long-term retention [2].

Let's focus on two approaches to strategic reader training: a)Directed Reading–Thinking Activity (DR-TA) b) Question the Author

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Teachers should guide students through these steps in DR-TA approach:
Step 1: Have students brainstorm ideas related to the text topic
Step 2: Ask students to make predictions about what they will read, using clues from the text (such as text headings, pictures, charts)
Step 3: Have students read one section of the text, then stop and revise their predictions (teacher should choose a good stopping point so that predictions will come naturally)

Approach2:   Question   the   author
Using this approach, encourage students to ask the following kinds of questions as they read:

- What is the author talking about?
- What does the author want us to know?
- That's what the author said, but what did the author mean?
- Does that make sense when we think of what the author told us before?

The purpose of the DR-TA approach is to activate students' knowledge on the topic of the text, help students to monitor their comprehension as they are reading, and set goals for reading. The Question the Author approach is another way to encourage students to interact with a text before, during, and after reading.

Moreover, studies by Alderson (2000) show that background knowledge plays a crucial role in text comprehension, especially among second language learners who often struggle with unfamiliar cultural references and textual organization [1]. This is an excellent way to help students draw inferences from a reading and notice tone and author purpose.

Recent research in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) pedagogy has highlighted the growing importance of tailoring reading instruction to the professional and academic needs of learners. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), ESP reading activities should be situated within the learners' discipline, utilizing authentic texts that reflect real-world language use in their field of study. This approach not only enhances reading fluency but also deepens students' familiarity with field-specific terminology and discourse structures [5].

Furthermore, contemporary scholars emphasize the role of schema theory in reading comprehension. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) argue that reading is an interactive process in which readers actively construct meaning by integrating textual information with their pre-existing knowledge (schema) [3]. This underlines the importance of activating background knowledge before reading and using pre-reading activities to improve understanding and motivation.

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Another noteworthy development is the integration of metacognitive strategies in reading instruction. Research by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) identifies three categories of metacognitive reading strategies: global reading strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support reading strategies [8].By teaching these strategies explicitly, instructors can help students become more autonomous and reflective readers, better able to adapt their reading approaches depending on the text type and purpose.

Practical Recommendations for ESP Reading Instruction

1.   Task-Based Reading: Implement real-life tasks that require students to use the text to solve a problem or make decisions (e.g., interpreting a user manual, analyzing a lab report).

2.   Corpus-Informed Materials: Use discipline-specific corpora to identify high-frequency terms and common syntactic structures to include in reading activities.

3.   Digital Literacies: Incorporate online reading platforms, digital articles, and multimodal texts, preparing students for professional digital communication environments.

4.   Scaffolding Academic Texts: Guide students through the structure of abstracts, introductions, and research articles using graphic organizers and text-mapping exercises.

These approaches not only help learners develop stronger reading skills, but also promote higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation — critical for academic and professional success.

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