TEACHING ESL ADULTS AND CHILDREN TO READ EXTENSIVELY

IBIERE KEN- MADUAKO

Department of English
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education
Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Abstract

This paper examines different strategies used in teaching adults and children to read extensively. Reading involves decoding information from a written text and ascribing meaning to the orthographic symbols. It is therefore, a psycho-socio- linguistic process involving the eyes, the brain and some other linguistic elements. It suggests a form of interaction between language and the system of thoughts of the reader, who has to ascribe significances to the writer's intentions embodied in the graphic symbols, relating them to his own field of knowledge and experience. Consequently, reading is a process of social interaction between a writer and his audience. This study identifies the different strategies that are employed in reading: Survey reading;. Skimming and Scanning. The paper also listed ten principles that define a successful Extended Reading (ER) programme for second language adult learner, reading and agreed that. The teacher has a very significant role to play in the ER programme. The study concluded that reading is uplifting and is exposes one to different cultures, belief systems and experiences of people worldwide. Reading expands the horizons of the reader's abilities and puts him a step ahead of others. The study recommended that Nigerian government should establish reading corners and class libraries. School libraries should be well equipped to sustain teachers Extensive Reading Programmes because an ER programme needs a well-equipped library to function well.

Keywords: intensive, Extensive, reading Corner, Conceptual.

What Is Reading?

Many definitions have been given to the term "Reading." One of such definitions is the one given by Carroll (1964) in Hasenstab and Laughton (1982:5) as.

"…an activity of reconstructing (overtly and covertly) a   reasonable spoken message from a printed text, and making meaningful response to the reconstructed message that would be made to the spoken message."

According to Chinttha (2008) as cited in Abu-Ubaida, Amina, Aishatu and Abubakar (2017:75) being able to read fluently depends on a number of different skills. Moreover, it is the teachers' role and responsibility to provide, plan and teach an effective reading program that will enable the learner to become a skilful reader.

In other words, reading involves decoding information from a written text and ascribing meaning to the orthographic symbols. Reading is therefore, a psycho-socio- linguistic process involving the eyes, the brain and some other linguistic elements. It suggests a form of interaction between language and the system of thoughts of the reader, who has to ascribe significances to the writer's intentions embodied in the graphic symbols, relating them to his own field of knowledge and experience. Consequently, reading is a process of social interaction between a writer and his audience.

Reasons For Reading (Why do we Read?)

According to Soliman (2012:26) reading is crucial to the functionality of our society – our institutions and practices are built upon the written word. Reading is also one of the most sophisticated mental functions and the one which contributes to the uniqueness of the human mind."

People read for many reasons but scholars have discovered two major reasons why people read and they are:

a. Reading for pleasure and

b. Reading to gather information

Consequently, many skills are involved in the reading procedure. Some of these skills are:

a.   Recognition of the orthographic shapes and symbols (That is, the ink marks on the pages of a book. Development of mechanical skills is involved at this stage).

b.   Understanding the relationship between the shapes   and language (the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, etc.).

c.   Comprehension of the conceptual and communicative value of sentences   and utterances (cf. Longe (1979:93). According to him, "The essence of the reading skill is therefore the transforming of the visual representation of language into

meaning" that is reading involves the following; letter identification, word identification and meaning association.

Different strategies are employed in reading:

a. Survey reading: surveying the material to be read.

b. Skimming: To read something quickly to find the main ideas in it.

c. Scanning: To read something quickly to locate specific information e.g. I scanned the list for your name.

d. Content study reading: Reading in detail to understand the content.

e. Linguistic study reading: (that is, to study the language of the text. the linguistic features utilized.

From the above strategies, we recognise two main types of reading.

1 Extensive reading which incorporates (a-c) above and

2. Intensive reading which involves (d-e).

Intensive Reading

Reading here is more intense and detailed. One reads for full comprehension of the content of the passage, book or novel and a detailed study of the language features; lexical and syntactic, which are required to decode the message in a given text. In intensive reading, the skill is taught through a detailed study of "short" passages followed closely by an analysis of language use. Intensive reading is slower and more careful reading of a small text and the focus is more on reading rather than on language use.

Extensive Reading

This is an alternative approach to reading which involves reading a lot, reading as much material as possible for the main purpose of gaining a general knowledge of what the text is all about. Extensive reading is reading for pleasure, for the enjoyment of the entire reading experience. The theoretical/empirical basis of extensive reading is that "we learn to read by reading. Frank Smith (1975) in Smith and Elley (1977) stated that "we do learn to read by reading". Different empirical studies have confirmed the above assertion that extensive reading is useful in increasing learner's knowledge generally as well as his/her print exposure. It improves learners' writing abilities, the receptive and productive skills of learners and their vocabulary acquisition. See Krashes (1993) West and Stanovich (1989) Tsang (1996) and (Elley and Maugubhai (1983).

The main aim of extensive reading is to increase learners' fluency and pleasure in the reading process.

Strategies For Teaching Extensive Reading

According to Mary Clarity (Online), Extensive reading is not a quick fix, that is something that just crops up in a classroom during lessons. Rather, its benefits are revealed slowly and in different ways. It takes one step at a time, it is done consistently and with time, the results become evident.

Teaching Children To Read Extensively

At this stage, the children have gone beyond the preliminary stages of letter identification, word recognition and sentence meaning. The child is about to be taught how to read and enjoy doing it. The following strategies may be employed:

(1) Creating a "reading corner" in the class by the teacher.

• Flash an interesting news item each morning to stimulate discussion and motivate the children to read.

Practical Example

Teacher: Do you know that it is possible to go around the world in eighty days?

• Grant pupils the opportunity to discuss the matter.

• Present the book titled: Around the world in eighty days by Jule Verne.

• Teacher tells a brief story about the man named Phileas Fogg who made the journey.

• Teacher does not conclude the story creating the required suspense that would stimulate pupils to want to get to the end of the store.

TEACHER ACTIVITY: Advantages and disadvantages of this method.

(2) Devising/Establishing a Reading Programme.

• Identify learner's levels.

• Expose pupils to some graded readers which may be integrated into the regular classroom teaching. Graded readers help the teacher cater for the learning needs of the different grades and levels of learners in the class. They learn at their own pace.

a Provide a class library made up of graded readers.

• Alternatively, parents may be asked to provide one book each for the class library.

• Teacher can visit publishing houses and other related agencies for book donations.

• Children must have access to the collection of books in the library.

• Teacher solicits for information about pupil's reading interests, habits and attitudes through questionnaires.

- Teacher should have knowledge of pupil's reading abilities before and after the reading programme.

- Books chosen for the programme should reflect pupil's interests, familiar and preferred titles, cultures, age, etc.

- Pupils should be allowed to borrow books for a period of time during the reading programme. They are allowed to choose the books to read according to their areas of interest and reading levels.

- Teacher must closely monitor pupils' reading.

- Teacher should model and read the books in class. This should be in a relaxed atmosphere, no questions or answers at the end.

- Good record keeping must be involved, both formal and informal records (by both teachers and pupils) of progress made.

- Record diaries and book reports may be used with a card file system in order to record titles read by pupils and their written comments on the books.

- Teacher should conduct interviews of pupils throughout the duration of the programe.

- Wall charts may be used to represent titles read in class, exchanges of titles and discussions made.

- Pupils should be involved in the organization of the library

- Tables may be arranged with titles beautifully displayed during the reading periods.

- Pupils may be taken to a different and bigger library once in a while, for instance, the university libraries, the British Council library, for one of the lessons either weekly or monthly.

- The reading programme may be allowed to run for one or two terms, or for the whole year.

Discussion: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the ER programme?

• Improvement in reading comprehension

• Increases exposure to language

• Increases vocabulary development and word power

• Enhances improved writing motivation of learners

• Encourages fluency and reading enjoyment.

• Involves free voluntary reading

• Use of graded readers encourages learners to read according to their levels and at their own pace.

Teaching Adults To Read

According to Day and Bamford (2002), there are ten principles that define a successful Extended Reading (ER) programme for second language adult learners. These were later restructured into four distinctive categories by Victoria Rodrigo and others (2007:107). These include:

• **Reading purpose:** learners must know the purpose for which they must read: whether it is for pleasure of for eliciting information. They should be made to experience the pleasure of reading a book completely to become motivated to read some more

• **Reading Tactics:** Since the ER approach is based on the theoretical foundation that we learn to read by reading, adult learners should be encouraged to read a lot because the amount of reading done is crucial. Questions and summaries of texts are not required at the end of the exercise. Learners choose their own books and are encouraged to stop reading if the book was no longer entertaining them. They must select books that are easy for them to read and understand because readers need at least 98% knowledge of the words in a particular text to be able to infer at the meanings of new words. This should increase their confidence and motivation to read.

• **Reading Materials:** Learners should have access to books that cover a wide range of topics, genres and reading levels in the classroom. Teachers should display and arrange books in such a way that they appeal to the learners and reveal the different levels reading skills acquisition.

• **Teacher Roles:** The teacher has a very significant role to play in the ER programme. Originally, the ER programme was not devised for adults. It is therefore the responsibility of the teacher to explain to the adult learners the principles and methodologies involved. The teacher should model the activities, participate in reading books from the ER library. Engage in the book talks about the book he/she is reading.

Main Components Of The Extensive Reading Programme

The ER Programme is composed of the following significant components:

I. Sustained Silent Reading : this involves extensive reading of materials of interest

2. Book talk: this involves sharing with others what one has read.

3. Reading Aloud: this is where the teacher models the language. The pupils also tell their stories while others listen and enjoy the stories.

Conclusion

We have tried to show in this paper the importance of teaching both children and adults the act of reading extensively. A very popular poster declares that reading is uplifting and indeed it is because it exposes one to different cultures, belief systems and experiences of people worldwide. Reading expands the horizons of the reader's abilities and puts him a step ahead of others. Extensive reading is a skill that has not been consciously practiced in the typical Nigerian classroom because much of the emphasis has been on intensive reading, teaching children to read comprehension passages and to answer questions or to summarize passages. This training workshop is a step in the right direction. Nigerian teachers should be encouraged to teach extensive reading in the classrooms. They should establish reading corners and class libraries. School libraries should be well equipped to sustain teachers Extensive Reading Programmes because an ER programme needs a well-equipped library to function well. All hands must therefore be on deck to initiate activities, make appeals to the relevant agencies for the required support and necessary action needed to get Nigeria reading.

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