

Does Instructions Enhance Reading Comprehension Abilities in the ESL Classroom?

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Abstract

The role of reading is the foremost in student's preparation for the sake of comprehension of the text. Through reading, student gets good command on content and uses writing skill to represent what he learned through reading. Effective reading instructions are used to guide the students to get comprehension of the text while reading, because reading is a complex activity which requires organization of several other skills concurrently. Teachers should make use of these instructions while teaching reading skills. Reading helps the students to enhance their knowledge for their bright future. It should be practiced daily to get command over it. Teachers should start teaching basics of reading and should make them to get command over phonemic awareness, fluency and comprehension. Researcher found some of the reading difficulties of students like comprehension, understanding the exact sense of the text and unfamiliar vocabulary. It affects the students to get command on content to improve their understanding. The researcher experimented to resolve the problem by using reading instructions and involving the students to make use of dictionary. Finally, researcher found that the comprehension level of the students is increased by implementing instruction based teaching.

Keywords: Phonemic Awareness, Comprehension, Effective Reading Instructions, Fluency.

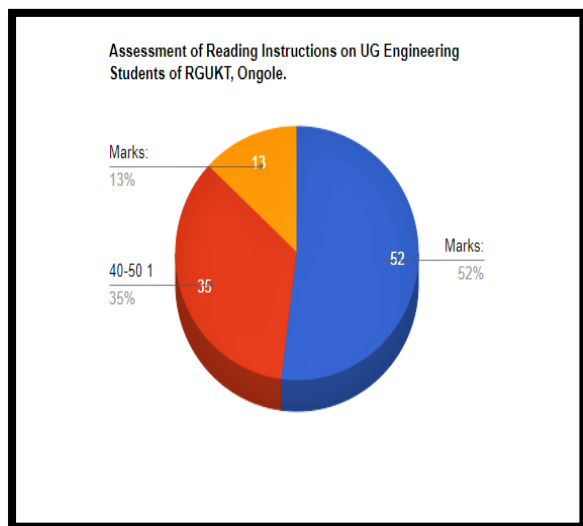
INTRODUCTION

B Instructional strategies of reading can show a positive impact on student's level of understanding of reading. Since students are suffering with reading problems like dyslexia, eye problems, decoding, reading comprehension and speed, these will help them to overcome with good practice. Jeanne Chall, in her 1967 book, learning to read: The Great Debate analyzed studies of instruction with premature reading instruction and established superior outcomes in phonics programs. Teaching reading requires scrupulous knowledge about verbal and written language, how kids learn and find grip of literacy skills, and a mixture of instructional strategies to deal with students' diverse needs (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Moats & Lyon, 1996). Instructs acts like a rules to the students to remember before going to start reading the text. Decoding of text is a major concern for the student while he is preparing for the sake of exam or competition.

Methodology

The researcher has taken 100 UG Engineering Students of RGKT, Ongole for the study by offering them the questionnaire as pre-test to know the reading proficiency levels. Based on the results of pretest researcher prepared the reading instructions like letter/ word instruction, word study, introducing the

text, vocabulary, Phonemic awareness, fluency and reading comprehension. Each student is provided with reading comprehension passages for 100 Marks to test their comprehension levels. Reading levels of the students has been increased and shows a good change in answering reading comprehension passages. Almost 52% students answered correctly and got a score more than 40 out of 50 and around 35% students answered and got a score of 30 to 40 marks out of 50 marks and 13% students stood in between 15 to 30 marks out of 50 marks.



Letter/ Sound Instruction

This is the primary instruction that teachers have to instruct to their students on introduction to the letters with their accurate pronunciation because if teacher does not pronounce the letter properly students do not learn the accurate recognition of the letters. Hence, recognition of the letter and pronunciation of the letters are the first instruction that teacher should instruct students for their basic level of understanding of reading.

Word Study

After learning the letters then it's time to focus on words, so teachers have to teach word formation, syllabification, stress and intonation for better understanding of words with proper pronunciation. A meaningful combination of letters is called word. So should understand this concept and then they should learn and improve their vocabulary. Phonetics helps the students to pronounce the words as they are. Hence students should learn the words with at most interest to construct sentences.

Leveled Readers

Teachers have to identify the student's level of understanding of reading and they should take necessary steps to improve their level of understanding of the readers. If teacher starts using high vocabulary with proper pronunciation they may not understand at first. By offering number of practical and oral session students will be able to identify and pronounce like their teachers. Teachers have to identify their level and offer training related to their level.

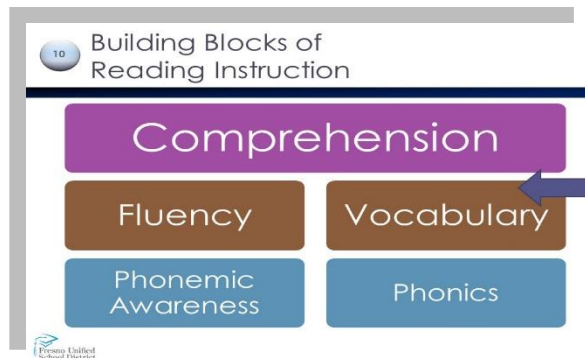
Introducing the text

While introducing the text to the students, Teachers have to focus on their standards. It is better if teacher gives oral on how to pronounce words with good pronunciation, later students start listening to the teacher's voice and then they will start learning the word with pronunciation. Teachers have to give hint words, clues or show diagrams related to the text to make their students to think about the accurate words suits to that context. Teachers have to create an interest and passion in the student's mind in learning words and constructing sentences. Student can get good comprehension only when he focuses on word with its meaning. Initially students may come across with pronunciation and vocabulary meaning problems, so teachers have to suggest dictionary for the sake of meanings to the new words.

But it would be more worthy if teachers suggest digital dictionary where students can come to know the meaning of the text along with pronunciation, because teachers are not available all the time whenever students start reading the text. So teachers have to offer practical way or learning by doing mode to make their students to get sound knowledge on vocabulary with usage.

Building Blocks of Reading Instructions

These instructions help the reader to get better command on comprehension of the text in a systematic way. Teachers are using these instructions in teaching reading. Some of the effective reading instructions are Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Fluency and Reading Comprehension



(Image taken from Google Images)

Phonemic Awareness

“Phonological awareness can be defined as conscious sensitivity to the sound structure of language”. (Lane & Pullen, 2004). The word Phoneme means the speech sound. Teachers have to provide Phonemic Awareness to the primary level students because they just listen to the instructions of the teacher at that time more. So the teachers have to be very particular about pronouncing the word. Teachers can improve this by making the oral sessions which means asking the student to repeat the sounds of the words after teacher pronounce the words. Teachers should be very cautious while pronouncing the sound of each letter. Teachers have to develop listening skill in the students to understand these phonemic sounds. Teachers have to write each letter of the word and pronounce individual letter sound and then they should read complete word with proper sound. To develop this Teachers have to teach Phonetic symbols with articulation then students will be able to understand the exact sounds.

Phonics

It is an ability to bring the sounds together with the symbols. So it's the sound symbol relationship also called alphabetic principle. Teachers can do an activity with their students to improve phonics using phonemic awareness is, Teacher will place three symbols of the objects like moon, ball, dog cardboards then teacher should ask the students to place the correct letter in front of those three objects letter cardboards. It will improve the imagination and prior knowledge of the student and then can understand the phonics concept well.

Vocabulary

As a part of enhancing reading, Teachers suggest the students to concentrate on vocabulary for better understanding of the text. If the student is not able to understand the vocabulary or if they come across new vocabulary, Teachers may suggest them to go through dictionaries, Thesaurus and glossaries to search the required words. Teachers have to explain how to search a word and how to learn its pronunciation using the phonetic symbols available just beside to the words. Students can use digital dictionary for updated vocabulary as well they can get an option of listening to the new words pronunciation. The supplementary vocabulary a reader knows, the easier it is for the reader to read and understand text (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, & Watts-Taffe, 2006; Kamil, 2004; NRP, 2000).

Fluency

It is a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Fluency means reading the text as it is. Native speakers of English have to understand when you pronounce the words. It is a need strategy because people do not understand the content if we pronounce the word wrongly. Fluent reading of text grabs the attention of the people more. It is an ornament to the language. Reading fluency, which can be distinct as a blend of word reading exactness and automaticity, reading rate, and prosody, is a vital part of reading proficiency Page 15 of 72 (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005)

Reading Comprehension

It is a strategy to judge whether student can get command on the text that they read or not. The RAND Reading Study Group (2002) defined reading comprehension as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (p. 11). Reading comprehension is not just a passage with multiple questions to be answered. It is a way of reading a text with understanding. Some of the students may write content as it is in the form of answers in reading comprehension. Students have to read the reading comprehension passage twice by using skimming and scanning techniques to find out the main ideas and supporting ideas then only they need to read the questions, without reading the passage if students start reading the questions first means they cannot get sense of the text. There will be several levels of reading comprehension passages to assess student's knowledge on reading. Answers for the reading comprehension should be clear, concise and relevant to the questions. Teachers have to provide worksheets on this reading comprehension passages to improve their reading skills.

Conclusion

Teachers can surely implement these reading strategic instructions to enhance the reading skills of UG Engineering students. Since from childhood students started reading but still they feel difficulty due to non usage of effective instructions of their teachers while teaching the content. Student has to overcome the problem of decoding by simply following the above mentioned instructions to get good marks and good command on reading comprehension. This paper gave a detailed methodology of student's assessment and proved that reading instructions can help the students to enhance their reading comprehension.

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