

APPLYING CURRENT APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF READING NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

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Reading is a crucial skill for students of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and understanding the rationale behind these methods is essential for teachers who want to improve their reading lessons.

In linguistics, researchers make an important distinction between *meaningful learning* and *rote learning*. An example of rote learning is simply memorizing lists of isolated words or rules in a new language, where the information becomes temporary and subject to loss. Meaningful learning, on the other hand, occurs when new information is presented in a relevant context and is related to what the learner already knows, thereby being easily integrated into one's existing knowledge system. According to Ausubel (1968), learning that is not meaningful will not become permanent.

The new top-down reading is not just extracting meaning from a text but a process of connecting information in the text with the knowledge the reader has.

For the teacher applying this approach the first task is to select texts that are relevant to the students' needs, preferences, individual differences, and cultures. The goal is to provide meaningful texts so the students understand the message, which entails activating existing knowledge and building new knowledge. After selecting a text, the following three stages of activities are typically used:

1. *Pre-reading*. At this important stage, the teacher should make sure that students have the relevant knowledge for understanding the text. This is achieved by having students think, write, and discuss everything they know about the topic, employing techniques such as prediction, *semantic mapping* and *reconciled reading*.

2. *During-reading*. This stage requires the teacher to guide and monitor the interaction between the reader and the text. One important skill teachers impart at this stage is note-taking, which allows students to compile new vocabulary and important information and details, and to summarize information and record their reactions and opinions.

3. *Post-reading*. The post-reading activities focus on a wide number of questions, ranging from simple to complex, which allow for different interpretations and help to check comprehension.

The pre-reading stage deserves special attention since at this stage students have the initial contact with the text. It is crucial to have such a pre-reading activity as *previewing*, where students look at titles, headings, and pictures, and read the first few paragraphs and the last paragraph. This activity can help students understand what the text is about.

It is interesting at the initial stage to prepare some exercises giving students the chance to develop their prediction and anticipation skills. With some headlines, students usually have no difficulty. They easily define the possible topic of the article, define if the article is about past or future events (*Banks take blame for credit crisis, UBS faces three-year fight for reputation, Lessons from UBS, JPMorgan seeks jobs for sacked Bear staff, A hard lesson in bank management*).

In many cases, though, students need the help of the teacher. Sometimes they encounter lexical difficulty as in the headline *'The West's financial centers run red'* when some students do not know the meaning of the phrasal expression 'to run red'. In such cases, the teacher can recommend to look through the article (or only the first and the last paragraphs) to guess the meaning of the headline. Sometimes subtitle can clarify the topic of the article. Let's look at the headline *'When rivers run dry'* which seems to have nothing with economic problems. But after reading the subtitle *'Can bank regulators and central banks prevent future liquidity crises?'* students understand that the article deals with money issue and the metaphor used in the headline.

The desire of the author to create a vivid picture while providing as much information as possible in a limited space, often results in unusual sentence structure of headlines. Such a headline as *'The End of an Era, Even at Goldman'* can be of difficulty for those who do not know about problems faced by Goldman Sachs Group in 2008.

Semantic mapping is another pre-reading activity that can be used to pre-teach vocabulary and to assess the students' prior knowledge on the topic. This activity asks students to brainstorm about the given topic as the information is displayed on a graphic "map." As students make associations, the map becomes a thorough summary of the concepts and vocabulary that they will encounter in the reading. It can also help build vocabulary that students do not possess yet. So, while reading the article *'When rivers run dry'* students are asked to find the words, which reveal the meaning of the headline. Such words as *'precipitate, evaporate, flow, liquid, pool, dry up'* build new associations for students and facilitate the usage of the words. Again, it is important to select the texts that contain the material that is likely to be familiar and interesting to them.

Another type of pre-reading activity called *reconciled reading lesson*, which reverses the sequence presented by many textbooks where the text is followed by questions. Instead, the teacher develops pre-reading questions from the questions that appear at the end of the reading. Using prior knowledge efficiently contributes to fluent readers, and it is important to support and develop a relationship between visual and nonvisual (prior knowledge) information; the more the students know the subject, the less difficulty they encounter while reading.

References:

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