

METHODS FOR IMPROVISING READING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

Communication is key in almost all walks of life today. The importance of communication skills has been a much debated talk worldwide for the past few decades. And in order to succeed in the rat race, students have the impelling need to be knowledgeable in their respective subjects and good communicators as these are the major criteria that recruiters look for during their selection processes. Reading plays a major role in both these criteria and therefore the importance of reading must be given. Upon regular and meticulous practice, one can master reading skill which is the key to understanding in any language.

KEYWORDS: *Communication- Good Communicators- Reading- Practice*

INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial, man has utilized language as the mode of communication. Communication can be well defined as the exchange of thoughts, ideas, views and expressions and experiences with other people. It includes the four major skills, namely, Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Mastery over these four skills will ensure effective communication. With the IT revolution taking over the world and globalization at its peak, technical communication has been brought to the limelight especially in the field of education.

Sound technical skills and excellent English communication are the two most sort after qualities in a suitable candidate. In short, recruiters look out for good communicators. Good communication skills are an asset whose value is beyond measure for any organization. Proficiency of all the four skills is important and essential in order to become a good communicator. Listening and reading are considered as receptive skills. On the other hand, speaking and writing are considered as active skills. The role English plays in multidisciplinary subjects like engineering are enormous and vital as it involves efficient communication with a team consisting of members from diverse backgrounds and also explaining complex technical concepts with a non-technical crowd.

Reading and Its Importance

Reading is the comprehension of a written material and is fundamental in the life of a student as it helps in obtaining knowledge in a particular subject. The process of reading involves, decoding or recognition of the symbols (alphabets), framing or structuring of the letters and words, and finally interpreting the same into a meaningful sentence. Good readers become good learners and good learners shine academically. Reading also helps to improve our phonetic skills, articulation and pronunciation of words, vocabulary and voice modulation.

It is known to stimulate creative thinking and come up with imaginative thoughts and creative ideas. According to Sri Bakiya Lakshmi (2017), reading acts and provokes the taste buds of creativity leading to the intake of nutrients, thereby stimulating creativity, greater imagination and development of language. To quote Francis Bacon, "Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man." Reading helps to extract the essence of the written material in its original sense. And in order to achieve and experience the joy of reading, command over English is essential. Reading extensively is specially required for students of engineering stream because of its multidisciplinary nature and the vast expanse of areas the subject covers. But, this seems to be a herculean task for many students due to the lack of proficiency in English and therefore fail to benefit from it.

Methods to Improve Reading Skills

Even though reading is classified as a receptive skill, it is not a passive activity. Much to one's wonder, in actual terms, it is an active search of meaning. Efficient reading is a skill that can be practiced and mastered. Given below are a few methods that would help to improvise reading skills.

- Practicing reading for at least 15 to 30 minutes a day, every day, will make a big difference.
- Providing opportunities for students during class hours for reading a particular passage or any lesson as a whole, as a practice to check the pronunciation, modulation, stress, pace, intonation, articulation etc.
- Students should be encouraged to read new passages which are not familiar for them as this would also help to improve vocabulary.
- Black-boards and flash cards may be used to make the learner read, pronounce and understand the word. This also helps in building vocabulary and familiarizes the words.
- Learners can be asked to read out loud as it involves the text in two ways: the eyes look at the words, and ears, listen to them. It is also a good method to practice pronunciation.
- Skills such as silent reading, scanning and skimming should be introduced to students as it would be of great help for students in the tertiary level of education. The mechanisms and advantages of developing these skills should be explained to the students in detail.
- Reading of magazines, journals, newspaper, stories, etc., by students should be encouraged as exposure to different writing styles would help to attain proficiency in English.
- Practice exercises for reading directions, phone directories, job advertisements, official notices, bus and train time-tables, business letters etc., can be carried out in class.
- Motivating students to read lessons every day in the classroom and at home and summarizing the same has dual purposes. This can help improve reading skill and also make the student become proficient academically.
- Learners should be made to read the sentences with missing words and fill the blanks with the word they feel is most appropriate based on the rest of the sentence. This activity not only improves reading comprehension, but will train students to use context to learn new vocabulary words.

- Frequent visits to the library will help the learner to improve library skills so that they can develop habit of reading.
- The reading comprehension exercises provided must be must be arranged from simple to complex or familiar to unfamiliar text to help in the improvement of fluency.
- Students should be taught about specific reading types such as intensive and extensive reading and their utilization in their daily lives.
- Re- reading is advisable as it helps to catch up on the less familiar and new words present in the material and gain sense out of it.

CONCLUSIONS

Reading is given importance in any language as it leads to understanding. Enhancing reading skills simultaneously enhances language, vocabulary, communication, fluency, creativity, thought process, interpretation skills and ability to critically analyze situations and things. Therefore, one can attribute the holistic development of a human being to reading. With technology at their disposal, students need to take efforts and gain benefit from it. Improving their communication skills will help them in the long run.

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