



Review Article

Exploring the Essential Aspects in Reading

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ABSTRACT

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The present study aimed to investigate the fundamental element of reading instruction. Teaching reading presents a significant difficulty in educational institutions across Afghanistan. Educators instruct reading solely for accuracy and fluency; yet, it ought to be taught for various objectives by diverse methodologies. This study uses qualitative research to gather data through non-structured interviews, aiming for an in-depth knowledge of the subject. Ten teachers were selected intentionally. Five were educators from various schools, and five were instructors from Kabul Education University specializing in reading instruction. The findings suggest that reading instructors must understand various objectives, including skimming, scanning, identifying the main idea, grasping the general concept, and enhancing vocabulary, as well as strategies such as topic identification, adopting the author's perspective, reading for enjoyment, and encouraging student summarization to fulfill the aims of reading instruction. Comprehending these objectives and methodologies enhances instruction and education.

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Introduction

Reading plays a foundational role in education and is essential for academic achievement, particularly when learning a new language. It not only aids in the absorption of information but also stimulates critical thinking, comprehension, and communication. According to Davey (1983), reading is viewed as one of the most crucial skills in higher education (Davey 1983). However, in Afghanistan, reading instruction is often inefficient, as teachers tend to emphasize fluency without sufficiently addressing comprehension, critical thinking, or vocabulary acquisition. This shortfall in teaching methods results in poor student outcomes.

Effective reading instruction should help students not just read, but also understand, interpret, and apply the information they encounter. Siahhaan (2013) suggest that incorporating various strategies enhances students' reading performance. Unfortunately, many teachers in Afghanistan are unaware of how to teach reading for different purposes. This research aims to explore these gaps and propose effective strategies for improving reading instruction (Siahhaan 2013).

Problem Statement

Reading is an indispensable skill that fosters academic progress and enhances communication. However, many educators in Afghanistan do not teach it effectively, focusing solely on reading speed rather than comprehension, analysis, or critical thinking. This is partly because teachers are unaware of the broader purposes of reading, such as critiquing, predicting, and inferring meaning. Despite its importance, minimal research has

been conducted on this topic in Afghanistan, which highlights the necessity of this study.

Importance of the Study

This study seeks to offer valuable insights for teachers in Afghanistan, enabling them to understand the different objectives and methods involved in effective reading instruction. The findings aim to improve reading education in schools and universities, thereby enhancing student success and contributing to higher literacy rates in society.

Research Purpose

The primary aim of this research is to examine the key aspects of reading instruction, particularly focusing on the goals and techniques that can improve reading comprehension and student engagement. By identifying effective practices and addressing shortcomings in the current system, this study seeks to promote better reading education in Afghanistan.

Research Questions

1. What are the primary goals of reading instruction?
2. What are the most effective methods for teaching reading?

Literature review

The instruction of reading has been extensively researched, with scholars largely concurring on its critical role within educational settings. Reading extends beyond the simple act of decoding symbols; it involves a dynamic interaction between the text and the reader, where meaning is actively constructed through various cognitive strategies. This review will examine

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several core aspects of reading, including its definitions, different types, comprehension strategies, teaching methods, and existing gaps in the literature that the current study aims to address (Grabe 2011). Reading is often defined as the process of interpreting written symbols in order to extract meaning. According to Grabe (2011), reading engages both receptive and productive abilities, as readers not only receive information but also mentally process it, facilitating communication with themselves or others. Hughes (1989) further asserts that reading entails an interactive relationship between the reader and the text, requiring both cognitive and emotional investment (Hughe 1989). Cline, (2006) similarly describe reading as a decoding process in which readers draw upon their knowledge to understand the text (Cline 2006)

Types of Reading

Different types of reading, including skimming, scanning, sub vocalization, and study reading, are well-established in the literature. Fideles (2009) classifies these as fundamental techniques that support various reading objectives (Fideles 2009). For example, skimming allows readers to grasp the main ideas of a text, while scanning helps locate specific details. In contrast, study reading is a more in-depth approach, typically employed to critically engage with and internalize content. These techniques are particularly important for students in academic environments, where both general understanding and detailed comprehension are often required.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension, as defined by Healy (2002), involves understanding both the explicit and implicit meanings within a text. Woolley (2011) highlights that comprehension is not merely about word recognition but about constructing meaning through cognitive processes (Woolley 2011). Horowitz (2014) stresses the importance of intentional, reflective reading in comprehension, where readers actively monitor their understanding and draw inferences from context (Horowitz 2014).

Burn et al. (1984) identify four levels of reading comprehension: literal, interpretive, critical, and creative. Literal comprehension focuses on acquiring information directly from the text, whereas interpretive comprehension involves making inferences beyond what is explicitly stated. Critical comprehension requires evaluating the text's ideas and accuracy, while creative comprehension encourages readers to use their imagination to go beyond the text itself. These varying levels illustrate the complexities of teaching reading and the need for diverse strategies to meet different learners' needs (Burn 1984).

Teaching Strategies

Effective strategies for teaching reading are essential for improving students' abilities. Research suggests that methods such as making predictions, generating questions, and summarizing help enhance comprehension. Richard and Vacca (2003) advocate for the "think aloud" strategy, which involves students articulating their thought processes during reading to foster better understanding. This approach encourages active engagement with the text and supports the development of higher-order thinking skills (Richard and Vacca 2003).

Woolley (2011) also emphasizes the importance of comprehension strategies, noting that students who are taught to plan, monitor, and evaluate their reading become more independent readers. Techniques such as summarizing and predicting outcomes encourage deeper interaction with the text, resulting in more meaningful learning experiences (Woolley, 2011).

Gaps in Research

Although substantial research exists on reading strategies and comprehension, a notable gap remains concerning the specific purposes of teaching reading in various educational contexts, such as Afghanistan. Most studies emphasize strategies without adequately exploring how these techniques align with different reading objectives (e.g., reading for general comprehension, critique, or vocabulary development). This gap is particularly relevant in Afghanistan's educational system, where reading is often taught with a focus on fluency rather than comprehension or critical analysis.

This study aims to address this gap by investigating both the purposes and strategies of reading instruction in Afghanistan. Specifically, it seeks to explore how teachers can more effectively address different reading objectives—such as skimming, scanning, and reading for main ideas—and how these can be integrated into teaching practices.

This review underscores the importance of teaching reading with multiple objectives in mind, utilizing a range of strategies to meet these goals. While the existing research provides a solid foundation for understanding reading and comprehension strategies, the present study will add to the literature by examining how reading is taught in Afghanistan and identifying strategies that correspond to different reading purposes. The findings of this study have the potential to inform both educators and policymakers, leading to improvements in reading instruction and student outcomes.

By positioning the study within the broader context of reading pedagogy and addressing specific gaps in Afghanistan's educational system, the literature review sets the stage for a detailed exploration of reading purposes and strategies in the subsequent.

Definition of Think Aloud Strategy

Think aloud is a strategy that is used by some teachers to teach English reading in the school. According to Davey (1983) think aloud help students understand the kind of thinking required by a specific task. So, the students will get the means of text correctly with their critical thinking in think aloud.

Based on several definitions above, the researcher concludes that think aloud strategy is one kind of strategies in teaching reading when the teacher guides his or her students to use their background knowledge and to verbalize what the students think before, during, and after they read a text to get the meaning of the text.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was adopted to explore teachers' experiences with reading instruction.

Sample

To have deep understanding about the issue, I selected 5 professors from Kabul Education University teaching reading in faculty of language and literature. All these five teachers were selected purposively. Also, I selected five teachers from high school in Kabul city who teach English. They all agreed to be cooperative and honestly share their understanding about the issues.

Instruments

Data collection is one of the important steps in research. More attention should be paid to collect valid and reliable data. In this study, I used semi-interview to collect more data and have deep understanding about the aspect of reading. The interview was planned about 30 minutes for each participant but it took 45

minutes because they had a lot of information about the purposes and strategies to teach reading.

Data Analysis

The data were collected through interview from 10 participants. Five of them were professors of university and the other five were teacher in high schools of Kabul city.

Since, they were very experienced in teaching reading, so every individual provided me lots of information about the purposes and strategies of reading to teach. As long as my study is qualitative research, so thematic analysis is used for analyzing these data. After recording the voices of the participants, I transcribed them and looking for the common theme by using highlighting system. I read all the transcripts carefully many times and each time I found new things, I highlighted using a different color of marker. At the end I found many different themes which are described in finding.

Findings

The findings reveal that many teachers are unclear on the reasons for teaching reading or how to teach it effectively. Most focus on developing fluency without emphasizing comprehension or critical thinking. However, reading should serve multiple purposes, including:

1. Searching for Specific Information

This involves scanning the text for specific details, such as facts or dates.

2. Identifying the Main Idea

Recognizing the main idea and supporting details is crucial for overall comprehension.

3. Enhancing Vocabulary

A strong vocabulary improves all communication skills, including listening, speaking, and writing.

4. Reading to Learn

Students need to retain key details and link them to their prior knowledge to fully engage with a text.

Discussion

In Afghanistan, reading is often not taught with the seriousness it deserves. Teachers usually focus on fluency, neglecting critical skills like comprehension, skimming, scanning, and critical analysis. For students to thrive academically, these skills must be developed. Educators need to adopt a more holistic approach to teaching reading by integrating these skills into their instruction. Reading is one of four skill which is considered very important for academic purposes. Reading increase knowledge, develop reading skill such as scanning and skimming etc. (Doren 1972) Without improving this skill, learning may not take place in higher educational setting. In educational setting, learners should read carefully to comprehend, get the main idea and critique as well. However, this skill has not been taken seriously and don't teach it as it should be. Most teachers at school or universities even don't know how to teach and why to teach it. Reading is taught by most teacher at schools and University in a very traditional way in which they just focus on reading fluency by reading the text by both teacher and students. They think reading skill means just

improving reading fluency not all other purposes such as reading for search, reading for critique, reading for comprehension reading for main idea, reading for inference and scanning and skimming. Reading for search, main idea, inference, comprehension and reading for developing scanning and skimming skill can help students in their higher education. (Rahmaniah 2012) Also it helps them to understand the text and write their reflection about reading otherwise with only developing reading fluency, students cannot increase their knowledge and will be failed in higher education. So, it shows that reading should be taught for different purposes not only developing reading fluency and using different strategies.

Conclusion

Reading is an essential ability that profoundly influences pupils' academic achievement; however, it is frequently insufficiently instructed in Afghanistan. Educators must recognize the multifaceted objectives of reading and employ a range of tactics for effective instruction. Teachers can enhance students' understanding and critical thinking skills by employing techniques like as skimming, scanning, anticipating, and summarizing. In the absence of such an approach, students may encounter difficulties in achieving success in higher education. Understanding these objectives and methodologies enables an individual to become a proficient educator, hence enhancing student accomplishment. If teachers clearly articulate the objectives and employ the aforementioned tactics, pupils will achieve great success in both school and university.

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