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TEACHING READING TO STUDENTS OF PHILOLOGICAL DEPARTMENTS IN UKRAINE: RECONSIDERING WESTERN EXPERIENCE

The article is dedicated to the study of the process of teaching reading at philological faculties of higher educational establishments, its levels, types, stages and strategies. The article examines classifications of levels of reading. Such levels as literal, inferential, critical, creative; evaluation, synthesis, interpretation; elementary (rudimentary, basic or initial), inspectional, analytical (thorough, complete), syntopical (comparative) are described. In the article such types of reading as survey reading, skimming, and superficial reading (extensive reading), content study reading and linguistic study reading (intensive reading) are studied. Stages of reading – pre-reading, while/during reading, after-reading are characterized. Factors that predetermine a reader's understanding of the text are mentioned. The article presents the analysis and description of the strategies of teaching reading to students of philological departments in Ukraine that from the author's point of view are seldom used and could be of immense educational value if used consistently, among them are graphic organizers, picking up a scene, thinking aloud, K-W-L or K-W-W-L charts, probable passage, draw a text. The article also examines strategies for reading non-fiction as an important part of the process of teaching reading to students of philological departments, namely: establish purpose, survey, revise purpose, study in depth, evaluation. In the article the advantages of the listed strategies have been enumerated, their benefits for the students have been mentioned.

Keywords: *teaching reading, students of philological departments, reading level, stage of teaching reading, type of reading, reading strategy.*

НАВЧАННЯ ЧИТАННЮ СТУДЕНТІВ ФІЛОЛОГІЧНИХ ФАКУЛЬТЕТІВ В УКРАЇНІ : ПЕРЕОСМИСЛЮЮЧИ ЗАХІДНИЙ ДОСВІД

Стаття присвячена дослідженню процесу навчання читанню на філологічних факультетах вищих навчальних закладів в Україні, рівнів, стадій, типів і стратегій читання. У дослідженні представлено аналіз і описання, проаналізовано переваги і вигоди певних стратегій навчання читанню, запропонованих західними вченими, які, на погляд автора, могли б бути корисні за умови систематичного використання.

Ключові слова: *навчання читанню, студенти філологічних факультетів, рівень читання, стадія навчання читання, тип читання, стратегія читання.*

ОБУЧЕНИЕ ЧТЕНИЮ СТУДЕНТОВ ФИЛОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ФАКУЛЬТЕТОВ В УКРАИНЕ: ПЕРЕОСМЫСЛИВАЯ ЗАПАДНЫЙ ОПЫТ

Статья посвящена исследованию процесса обучения чтению на филологических факультетах высших учебных заведений в Украине, уровней, стадий, типов и стратегий чтения. В исследовании представлен анализ и описание, проанализированы преимущества и польза определённых стратегий обучения чтению, предложенных западными учёными, которые, по мнению автора, редко используются и могли бы быть полезны при условии систематического применения.

Ключевые слова: *обучение чтению, студенты филологических факультетов, уровни чтения, стадия обучения чтению, тип чтения, стратегия чтения.*

Problem statement. Reading is one of the four basic language skills and a difficult intellectual work as it requires the reader to perform mental operations of analysis, synthesis, comparison etc. As a process it is connected with the work of visual, kinesthetic, aural analyzers, and thinking. Scholars agree therefore, that reading is not only of great practical, but educational and social importance [5].

With the change of the Soviet paradigm certain changes were introduced into the educational process of institutions of higher learning in Ukraine. Firstly, a sudden access to a great number of sources blurred the boundaries between approaches and led to differences in the criteria of classification and choice of methods of education. Secondly, the differences in interpretation of many approaches and techniques of teaching reading has not been clarified yet. Thirdly, indiscriminate application of various approaches led to confusion and complication of the process of teaching reading. Fourthly, many strategies have remained unchanged leaving no space for experiment and innovation. However, many approaches to teaching reading have been overseen. In the article I argue that some strategies for teaching reading to students of philological departments offered by modern scholars have been either neglected or not considered properly in the educational process of higher educational establishments and can be of immense educational value.

The analysis of the latest research and publications. In use remain approaches of teaching reading described by V. Arakin [1], G. Rogova [5]. At the same time modern approaches mentioned in the works by G. Nagaray [3], Jack C. Richards, Theodore S. Rodgers [4], K. Tankersley [7], P. Westwood [9; 10] and others give ample material for consideration and are accessible to lecturers of higher educational establishments.

Formulation of the aim and tasks of the article. The aim of the research is to single out and describe reading strategies offered by western authors, which can be reviewed and more often used to facilitate the process of teaching reading to students of philological departments, increase their motivation and encourage them to study. Therefore, **the tasks** of the research include: a detailed analysis of the very process of teaching reading, its levels, types, stages, strategies, a brief overview of the existing viewpoints on their classifications, allocation of the strategies of teaching reading that in the author's point of view should be reconsidered according to stages and justification for this.

Material presentation. 1. *Reading as a basic skill. Levels of reading.* In modern methodology there exist somewhat different approaches to singling out levels of reading comprehension. Peter Westwood states that reading comprehension occurs at *four levels of complexity*. These levels are often referred to as *literal level, inferential level, critical level and creative level*. At the literal level the basic facts are understood. This information is contained explicitly within the text. At the inferential level the reader is able to go beyond what is written on the page and add meaning or draw conclusions. At the critical level the reader assesses the good sense of what he or she is reading, its clarity, accuracy and any apparent exaggeration or bias. At the creative level the reader can take information or ideas from what has been read and develop new ideas from them [9; 10].

Karen Tankensley however, singles out only three levels of reading comprehension: *evaluation, synthesis, and interpretation*. The author believes that evaluating information means being able to distinguish essential or core concepts from what is simply interesting. Synthesizing information means taking new information and combining it with existing information to construct a new

idea, a new way of thinking, or a totally new product or creation, while interpretation is giving one's own «slant» or meaning to the ideas or concepts [7].

Thus, we can see that the scholars' approaches to levels of reading comprehension are in general similar differing mostly in terms: *inferential level* [9; 10] / *evaluative level* [7]; *critical level* [7] / *synthesis* [9; 10]. However, some authors try to combine several criteria in their approach: a somewhat different classification of levels was offered by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles van Doren [2]. If the above mentioned authors singled out levels of reading in terms of mental operations involved, Adler and van Doren make an attempt to consider those together with readers' levels of language proficiency. As a result, the classification contains the levels, where higher ones include lower ones thus being cumulative: 1) *elementary (rudimentary, basic or initial) reading*. This level presupposes a student's encounter with black marks on the paper and the ability to interpret them; 2) *inspectional reading* presupposes that the student is allowed to set a time to complete an assigned amount of reading. The authors call it «skimming systematically» [2, 18]. 3) *analytical (thorough, complete) reading* is always intensely active and preeminently for understanding; 4) *syntopical (comparative) reading*. When reading syntopically, a person reads many books and places them in relation to one another and to the subject they all resolve [2]. Ukrainian students often study all but the fourth level of reading, with a special course of analytical reading at philological faculties.

2. *Types of reading*. Institutions of higher learning pay attention to teaching the five types of reading activity the first three, *survey reading, skimming, and superficial reading* are sometimes grouped together and called *extensive reading*. The object of such reading is to cover the greatest possible amount of text in the shortest possible time. The remaining two kinds of reading activity, *content study reading and linguistic study reading* are also often grouped together and called *intensive reading*. The term indicates that it is not the nature of the skills involved that is of most interest but the results, in this case a deep and thorough understanding of the black marks on the paper [8].

Speaking of reading it is essential to mention the *factors* which predetermine a reader's understanding of the text. Among them are many including the reader's motivation, interest, vocabulary, general knowledge of the particular subject, word identification skills, reasoning ability, use of effective strategies to identify main ideas and supporting detail, and an appreciation of text structure [9].

1. *Stages of reading*. It is essential to note the impossibility of studying strategies of reading without certain stages as each strategy is often designed for a certain period of teaching reading and pursues definite tasks. As to the stages of teaching reading the unanimity of opinions is not hard to explain. They are as follows: *pre-reading, while/during reading, after-reading stages* [5; 7]. Here is a brief overview of them.

Pre-reading stage. At this stage the teacher activates students' prior knowledge related to the topic, pre-teach some difficult vocabulary to be encountered in the text, encourage students to make predictions. Guidance *during reading* may encourage the student to look for cause and effect relationships, compare and contrast information, respond critically to information given, check for understanding, and highlight the main ideas. *After reading* the text the teacher may help students review information, summarize and retell, check for understanding, and encourage critical reflection and evaluation [10].

2. *Strategies for reading fiction and non-fiction*. The term «reading strategy» itself poses a contradiction as Ukrainian scholars often consider some strategies to be activities within a certain strategy, while their western colleagues often single out only the latter without further subdivision. Basic strategies of reading differ in names, content and tasks they involve. Reading expert Laura Robb advises that students need to be taught the complex strategies that enable them to appreciate the nuances of mood, tone, and theme in books. They need to be guided to make deeper text-to-text connections, so they can relate the elements and themes of one book to other books, to their community, and their world [7].

There exists a great variety of reading strategies as well as activities within each of them. In our point of view the most laconic formulation of them was offered by Duke and Pearson (2002), quoted by Karen Tankersley. The scholars outlined six strategies that higher-level readers use to make meaning of text as they read. Those strategies are (1) *prediction/activation of prior knowledge*, (2) *using think-aloud strategies to monitor comprehension*, (3) *using text structures*, (4) *using and constructing visual models such as graphic organizers and imagery*, (5) *summarizing*, and (6) *questioning and answering questions while reading*. The strategies for each stage of reading that in our point of view could be of immense educational value in teaching reading to students of philological departments have been selected on the basis of the classification by K. Tankersley and P. Westwood and include only those which are never/seldom practiced.

Strategies for the *pre-reading stages* include:

1. K-W-L or K-W-W-L charts. Create a chart that has either three or four columns and label the columns «What I Know,» «What I Want to Know,» and «What I Learned.» Prior to reading, students fill in the «What I Know» and «What I Want to Know» columns. A fourth column could also be inserted if you want students to insert a column called «Where I Would Find This Info.» The filling of the chart may be a time-consuming occupation, though it can be accomplished at home. The results can be checked at/after the class.

- Probable passage. Students are given key words that have been selected from the text. For example, words that fit the categories of setting, characters, problem, solution, and ending might be selected from the passage. Students are first asked to examine the words and determine if they might be able to predict what the story is about based on a given set of words. Students are asked to write a paragraph giving the «gist» of the story. The teacher then provides a prepared summary to students with blanks for students to fill in with the key words prior to reading. When words can fit into several blank spaces in the narrative, students should be asked to justify why they have placed certain words into certain blank spaces. After reading, the students compare what they predicted with the actual story. Writing the «gist» of the story can be checked as a written assignment thus binding together reading and writing skills.

- Graphic organizer. Students are asked to create a graphic organizer to show what they know about a topic prior to reading. It is essential to note that this strategy is almost never used in the educational process of future philologists in Ukraine. However, the importance of visual memory development and role in education is hard to overestimate. In my point of view, this strategy could be very helpful if *not* used systematically and for the reading material that may cause reading or comprehension difficulties. A graphic organizer could be helpful in teaching such topics as «Art» or «Environment», in a word, any topic the vocabulary from which is not used every day and represents learning difficulties. Students may not only write, but also draw, paint, carve and make collages in their graphic organizers. Previous mini-research work is welcome as it helps students to better perceive the reading material.

Strategies to Use During Reading. Good readers can examine the author's style, purpose, mood, or tone, and they can critique the quality of the author's writing, technique, or style; take notes, make comments, ask questions, and summarize or organize the material that they have read. Some ideas regarding ways that reading can be accomplished in the classroom are listed below.

- Think aloud. The teacher models how to read and process the text for the students. After students learn the technique from seeing the teacher model this on multiple occasions, they can also be asked to «think aloud» for others, either in large-group or small-group settings. Thinking aloud, in my point of view, develops skills of analysis, critical thinking and stimulate students' mental activity. After acquiring the habit of reading aloud, a student continues to practice the procedure in his head.

- Pick a scene. Students are asked to mark their favorite scene as they are reading. After reading, students are asked to verbalize why they selected specific scenes. To my mind, this strategy allows to eliminate misunderstandings caused in the process of reading. As practice shows, usually students in a group underline more or less similar passages that cause bewilderment and as some of them are too shy to ask, others do not bother, this strategy provides a reasonable way to solve difficulties in reading.

After reading, the goal should be to clarify meaning, organize new information, blend information with prior knowledge, and confirm or reject predictions made about the material prior to reading [7; 9; 10].

After reading strategies. One of strategies which is often not taken seriously by lecturers is «draw a text». The benefit of the strategy, in my point of view, is in its potential to help students preserve certain associations and key concepts of the material read. Being able to remember one's picture of a certain episode/character/ event/author etc. students quickly make a connection with the covered material.

Strategies or techniques that are seldom singled out in Ukrainian textbooks as a separate issue are those that are used in reading non-fiction. Their benefits are evident: in the process of study students of philological departments read various types of texts so knowing and operating strategies for reading non-fiction make the process of studying much easier. Peter Shepherd and Gregory Unsworth Mitchell give a detailed description of the latter:

1. *Establish Purpose.* Answer the following question as carefully and completely as possible: What do I want to learn from this material? This strategy coincides with general strategies of the pre-reading stage.

2. *Survey.* A book or publication should be surveyed as follows: Read the title, any subtitles, jacket summaries (in the case of a book), and identify the source of the publication, i.e. the author and publisher. Read the date of publication or copyright. Analyse the Index. Read the Preface. Nearly always written last, it will often provide an excellent summary, and usually a statement of purpose for the book and a note on the author's perspective on the subject. Also scan the Forward and Introduction. Read the Table of Contents. Note the sequence and check for Chapter summaries. Chapter summaries are an abstract of the Chapter contents. They will frequently inform you whether or not a particular publication is suitable for your purposes. The next step is to look at the visual material. Read the maps, graphs, illustrations, charts, and bold headings. Get a close feel for the actual contents of the book by looking at beginnings and ends of chapters, subsection headings and anything else which catches the eye – bold print, italicised sections, etc. Read any summaries the author may have provided. If there are study questions at the end of each chapter, you should look at these also. This will give you an indication of the level of the book in relation to your present knowledge. Now you have completed these steps, then decide to use the book or not. This detailed steps can be used when choosing books for complementary rather than main reading.

3. *Revise Purpose.* Once you have surveyed the material and gained more information and if you have decided to use the book, then revise your original purpose for reading the book. Ask yourself: Why am I reading this? This will establish your specific learning objectives. Often keeping in mind this strategy helps students remember about the purpose of reading and not forget about the original purpose of reading.

4. *Study in Depth.* Keeping in mind what you want to learn, speculate on what the material will tell you. Begin to read with the satisfaction of your objectives in mind. Sometimes it is inappropriate to start at the beginning, so decide where to start reading. Your overall purpose for reading the material is your best guide. Note: the manner in which the author presents his ideas will demand that you constantly vary the rate of reading and the reading technique you are using, if you wish to be efficient. Make notes, jot down main ideas and Key Words and use Mind Maps. It also helps to mark or underline key words and concepts in the book itself, with a soft lead pencil that can easily be erased, to aid review. Continually ask WHO, WHAT, WHY, HOW, WHERE and WHEN questions, as an interactive dialogue between yourself and the study material, in order to extract the important facts. The strategy presupposes deep penetration into the text with the aim to study it.

5. *Evaluation.* Your thoughts may be organized in the following way: 1) state the most important idea or concept pertaining to your reading purpose; 2) list related key words, facts, and information in order of importance using as few words as possible – that pertain to your learning objectives; 3) finally, jot down important words or phrases in relation to the ideas listed above. The most important things to jot down are key people, important events, places, and dates. The technique helps to summarize the information from the read source [6].

Conclusions and perspectives for further research. In conclusion it is necessary to say that as each lecturer modifies his or her classes in a unique and personal way, we cannot speculate on the advantages or disadvantages of each strategy rather on the frequency of their usage and benefits they can bring in higher education to students of philological departments. Thus, syntopical reading is quite seldom practiced at Ukrainian universities, its use being restricted by native literature classes, but not those of foreign language literature studies and practical classes of foreign language as a major. The study proves that some reading strategies are underestimated, others – never used in teaching reading. To achieve positive results it is necessary to experiment and employ new strategies, e.g. graphic organizers for the pre-reading stage might be useful to help a student realize what it is necessary for him to do, plan the actions and mental operations while reading. They help learners not to get confused in the process of reading. Thinking aloud helps a reader to concentrate on the process of understanding more deeply and develops habits of analysis. Drawing the text strategy enables students to remember key points of the material through conjuring mental images and making associations. Strategies of reading designed to read non-fiction are used in the educational process and do not differ much from those for reading fiction, rather giving more instructions and guidance for the very process of reading. Among the perspectives for further research remain working out a system of reading strategies for students of certain professions (doctors, lawyers), increasing the amount of syntopical reading, inventing new interactive strategies of reading.

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