



Imparting Reading Skills – A Strategic Approach

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ABSTRACT

Reading is a key factor in the development of knowledge and experience. Reading brings a rich experience to a reader and by means of that one may expand his knowledge. Without reading, an individual cannot gain educational achievements. Reading is an inevitable instrument for learning. Reading provides experience and through the experience gained, an individual may expand his knowledge, identity, interests and gain deeper understandings of him, others and the world. This paper focuses on the strategic approach to impart reading skills among the students.

KEYWORDS

Activities, Present scenario, Facilitator, Communication, Reading skills.

1. READING AND ITS USE

Reading is necessary for personal and social adjustment. Reading disability leads to maladjustment also at times. As a means of communication, reading is more versatile than wireless, television or film. It needs no equipment and can be done at any time and place. Primitive man considered reading as a magic and he was right in his assumption. Even though technology has made many wonders it has not replaced reading. The printed page reaches millions still untouched by electronic revolution. Reading meets the needs which the newer media cannot fully satisfy.

Adequate emphasis has to be laid on the study of English language right from the school stage. Subsequently, English has developed into a most useful and potential language in higher education and also significantly contributed for the educators, language planners and administrators to develop educational planning and administrative strategies.

Reading opens a wide window to expose the scientific, literary and cultural knowledge of the world for the Indian students and scholars.

2. DISINTEREST IN READING SKILLS IN THE PRESENT GENERATION

In the present scenario, in schools and colleges students were assigned a lot of academic works like homework, assignments, record works, project works and so on. So whenever there is a leisure time, they are likely to spend it on some entertainments like watching TV, playing, socializing, social media etc. Entertainment is preferred more by the students rather than knowledge based reading and learning. Such entertainments consume the productive time of the students. Inspiration is an important factor which seems to be missing in the task of reading skills. Rather than reading, people prefer audio visual pattern. They also prefer to know the crux of the message rather than spending time in reading.

Due to technological development, reading habits are changing. In our society today, while technology is slowly taking a steady control over individual lives, the reading habit is fast vanishing into thin air. Students now lack the skill of reading. Instead they spend more hours on electronic media. Browsing the net, playing with funky handsets and passing non-stop SMSs seem to be the order of the day, thereby making reading a book or any other piece of written material in a quiet or peaceful corner of a library or home become an archaic idea for most school children and adults. Therefore reading habit

has been instilled in the students through class room activities and games.

3. TEACHING READING SKILLS – A CHALLENGE IN PRESENT SCENARIO

In the current scenario, teaching reading skills is a great challenge for the teachers. With huge influence of the hearing and visual media over the entire population, there is a huge reduction in individual's affinity towards reading. The most common reason why students have to get into the habit of reading is for academic purpose which often has a pressure of scoring revolving around it resulting in a stress factor added to reading. Hence, the students' community often doesn't necessarily feel interested in cultivating the reading habit. Making the students to read who has disinterest in reading is a difficult task. Some students have the problem of lack of exposure to the language. Hence they exhibit lower confidence level in dealing with it.

Generally, people are reluctant to read languages that they are not confident with which results lowering the habit of reading. Inducing the confidence level to open-up is actually a tremendous challenge to be faced. One of the most important qualities of a good reader is to be imaginative in line with the author, for which the strength of vocabulary with appropriate knowledge of its meaning is essentially crucial. Aligning students to the right thinking mode thus is the great challenge for the teachers and therefore, activity based teaching paves way to help the students enhance their reading skills. Rumelhart (1977) proposed an interactive reading model, which starts with a 'visual information store' as a first stage in the reading process.

4. NECESSITY OF READING

Reading becomes indispensable in an individual's life apparently because it functions as an avenue for extending the frontiers of knowledge combined with exposure that steadily drives the person towards progression. Invariably, the noteworthy discrepancy of the learning potentiality of people seems to be high exclusively and exceptionally during their academia. Perhaps, this edifies a need/situation-based learning. It is here the need for a regular learning habit gains emphasis as this doesn't have any time limit. The process of learning can be categorized as learning from lectures and discussions, visual learning, learning from books, e-learning, and learning via experience. One common aspect that is inherent in all these, directly or indirectly, is the habit of reading. It can be even stated that Reading Habit is the backbone of knowledge

development.

5. READING TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The importance of possessing good communication skill is obviously felt in today's world. So it also becomes important to promptly nurture the skill. In order to train an individual in communication, the different options available are library, lectures, Group Discussion, E-resources, Television, Radio, Newspaper, Books and so on. Though the entire aforementioned are equally effective in doing what they are supposed to do, one can claim that an effective nurturing technique is the one that provides a vast, elaborate and in-depth knowledge but is less affected by time and space. When all these options available for a student are analyzed, most of them are dependent on lot of other factors and has its own limitations to happen anywhere and anytime. So one can claim that reading is the most user friendly as well as elaborate resource and habit to possess and hence the effective one.

6. CHANGE IN THE ROLE OF TEACHER TO FACILITATOR

Education system as a whole is witnessing rapid progress and innovation at the present time. From the subject level to the objective of teaching there is lot of analysis and experiments tried and optimized. One of the greatest challenge of the teaching community as a whole is to prepare the students group ready to excel at the next level and be independent. Since English being the core language that is the primary medium of communication of any subject, any student's core knowledge in any field is to some extent dependent on their English knowledge and handling capacity, which directly place an expectation level in front of the English teachers.

The value of independence is found to be the backbone of any student's success, both in their academic and professional life. Slowly and consciously the teaching system is adapting methodologies that are in line with this logic. The value of team work along with the act of personal grooming is combined together in transferring knowledge by the teachers. With students at different levels of English handling capacity reaching college at the same time, the teachers are allowed with very limited time to enrich them with sufficient input to improve their skill set. This situation has resulted in the teaching community facilitating technical know-how and strategies that can be adapted any time even after their study hours and days to improve them personally.

Earlier, the demand level and the expectation out of the student community was relatively less than what it is today. And in the coming years, we can anticipate the expectations to shoot up considerably. From the days where the common man's expectation of an English teacher used to be to just share the language has evolved to a level where they are demanded to mould experts. In the present scenario, everybody is expecting the students to expertise themselves in anything and everything and be the best in class. Since the teachers are the primary point of contact for enabling the same, they are expected to go out of the box and achieve the goal. This is the expectation from the teachers from almost every angle, the students, parents, market and the education system as a whole.

With huge investments by the parents group for their kids, there is a consumerist mindset creeping up where at most perfection is expected as end result. As far as learning system is considered, this is near perfect output expectation can't be justified as it depends on the individual capacity of each student. This indirectly has resulted in huge pressure on the students group too. One of the solutions to ease out this situation and pave way to improvement is to make students independent in their learning habit by guiding them with best methodologies and ideas.

At the ground level, the grasping and learning ability of the student is going to decide how well they are going to excel. Since English knowledge and skill to use it effectively is very, very important in the present scenario, teachers have switched over to process oriented techniques and ideas that will be registered in the students mind as activity and can be easily related to their day today actions. From an orator-listener mode of teaching, teachers have adopted additional role of a facilitator who acts as language engineers who feeds the knowledge through various activity oriented, task oriented and team oriented patterns that helps the students to learn things easily without much pressure and elevate up to the level of different expectations, the market, the parents, the peers and the self.

7. READING ACQUISITION THROUGH LANGUAGE GAMES

Pearson & Tierney (1984) proposed a reading/writing model. This interactive model is based on the interaction between the reader and the author. Teaching Reading skills through language games help the students in active contextual understanding and momentous language learning. It enhances team work and decision making skills and increasing interest in active team work with the winning attitude and it helps the students acquire reading skills automatically. Any learning will become relatively easier if there is a specific reference available and if the reference is practically emphasized, it makes learning much easier. It can be said that the exhibition of the real-life scenario through demo or actual object has huge impact in understanding the subject effectively. The virtual classrooms with video narration and descriptions are result of the impact of the aforementioned idea.

The next phase of demonstrative teaching is activity based teaching where the practical application of the subject in focus is taught through more creative, interactive and practically oriented learning. The participation for such technique is also better and the focus on the learning is far better as the core of this way of teaching is active involvement by the learners and successful acquisition of language through reading.

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