THE METHODS OF DEVELOPING READING ACTIVITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Atajonova Anorgul Jumaniyazovna
Assossiat professor of Urganch state pedagogical university
Karimova Shokhsanam Islomkhon kizi
Master of Urganch state university

Reading is a key skill to function at school. Students learn through text books and other educational texts, both offline and online. But reading is not only an educational skill, it is also essential to function in the society, with a growing amount of information that is widely available to everybody. In this modern 'information society' there is a growing need for students to become *critical readers*, in the sense that they learn to select, understand, integrate and evaluate what they read. Schools need to prepare students for this, and guide students in this process of becoming skilled readers who can "acquire and use information in a variety of contexts". Considering the growing influence of 'fake news', it becomes even more urgent for schools to prepare students to deal with information and learn how to make meaning of text and how to evaluate for example the reliability of a source [1].

Reading is a situated and purposeful activity, with different levels of simultaneous and interacting text processing. From cognitive research on reading, it is established that regarding the reading processes, the 'lower level' technical processes of reading fluently can be distinguished from the 'higher level' processes that are associated with comprehension. Understanding text means, from this point of view, that readers make connections between different text elements and prior knowledge and create a mental representation of the text. In this thesis, the focus is mostly on the comprehension aspects of reading, in which *integration* of the literal meaning of the text with one's prior knowledge is the essence of meaning making [2]. Readers make inferences, based on the text content and what they already know about the subject, and construct new, additional or deeper knowledge. Thus knowledge is not only an outcome of reading comprehension, but also the basis of it.

The PISA Framework, rather uses 'reading literacy' instead of just 'reading', in their latest definition, which is as follows: "Reading literacy is understanding, using, evaluating, reflecting on and engaging with texts in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential and to participate in society". In their text processing framework it is made visible what underlying processes contribute to reading comprehension, besides the process of reading fluently, namely: (1) locate information, (2) understand, and (3) evaluate and reflect. The process of locating information refers to both the ability of skimming the text to identify potentially relevant elements and selecting relevant parts of the text, based on first assessments of relevancy, importance, accuracy. The process of understanding a text refers to readers' ability to comprehend the literal meaning of sentences and short passages and integrate those to understand the whole text. And finally, the processes of evaluating and reflecting refer to readers' ability to reason beyond the literal meaning of a text and critically assess the quality, validity and usability of the text. All these processes function in the context of Task Management, that refers to the reader's orientation to a (reading) goal, planning and monitoring and regulating the processes during the reading activity.

Children's experience with books plays an important role. Many children enter school with thousands of hours of experience with books. Their homes contain hundreds of picture books. They see their parents and brothers and sisters reading for pleasure. Other children enter school with fewer than 25 hours of shared book reading. There are few if any children's books in their homes. Their parents and siblings aren't readers.

Picture book reading provides children with many of the skills that are necessary for school readiness: vocabulary, sound structure, the meaning of print, the structure of stories and language, sustained attention, the pleasure of learning, and on and on. Preschoolers need food, shelter, love; they also need the nourishment of books.

It is important to read frequently with your preschooler. Children who are read to three times per week or more do much better in later development than children who are read to less than three times per week. It is important to begin reading to your child at an early age. By nine months of age, infants can appreciate books that are interesting to touch or that make sounds [3,4].

How we read to preschoolers is as important as how frequently we read to them. The Stony Brook Reading and Language Project has developed a method of reading to preschoolers that we call *dialogic reading.*

When most adults share a book with a preschooler, they read and the child listens. In dialogic reading, the adult helps the child become the teller of the story. The adult becomes the listener, the questioner, the audience for the child. No one can learn to play the piano just by listening to someone else play. Likewise, no one can learn to read just by listening to someone else read. Children learn most from books when they are actively involved [5].

The fundamental reading technique in dialogic reading is the PEER sequence. This is a short interaction between a child and the adult. The adult:

Prompts the child to say something about the book,

Evaluates the child's response,

Expands the child's response by rephrasing and adding information to it, and

Repeats the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion.

Imagine that the parent and the child are looking at the page of a book that has a picture of a fire engine on it. The parent says, "What is this?" (the prompt) while pointing to the fire truck. The child says, *truck*, and the parent follows with "That's right (the evaluation); it's a red fire truck (the expansion); can you say *fire truck*?" (the repetition).

Except for the first reading of a book to children, PEER sequences should occur on nearly every page. Sometimes you can read the written words on the page and then prompt the child to say something. For many books, you should do less and less reading of the written words in the book each time you read it. Leave more to the child [6,7].

There are five types of prompts that are used in dialogic reading to begin PEER sequences. You can remember these prompts with the word CROWD.

Completion prompts

You leave a blank at the end of a sentence and get the child to fill it in. These are typically used in books with rhyme or books with repetitive phases. For example, you might say, "I think I'd be a glossy cat. A little plump but not too ____," letting the child fill in the blank with the word *fat*. Completion prompts provide children with information about the structure of language that is critical to later reading.

Recall prompts

These are questions about what happened in a book a child has already read. Recall prompts work for nearly everything except alphabet books. For example, you might say, "Can you tell me what happened to the little blue engine in this story?" Recall prompts help children in understanding story plot and in describing sequences of events. Recall prompts can be used not only at the end of a book, but also at the beginning of a book when a child has been read that book before.

Open-ended prompts

These prompts focus on the pictures in books. They work best for books that have rich, detailed illustrations. For example, while looking at a page in a book that the child is familiar with, you might say, "Tell me what's happening in this picture." Open-ended prompts help children increase their expressive fluency and attend to detail.

Wh- prompts

These prompts usually begin with what, where, when, why, and how questions. Like open-ended prompts, wh-prompts focus on the pictures in books. For example, you might say, "What's the name of this?" while pointing to an object in the book. Wh- questions teach children new vocabulary.

Distancing prompts

These ask children to relate the pictures or words in the book they are reading to experiences outside the book. For example, while looking at a book with a picture of animals on a farm, you might say something like, "Remember when we went to the animal park last week. Which of these animals did we see there?" Distancing prompts help children form a bridge between books and the real world, as well as helping with verbal fluency, conversational abilities, and narrative skills.

Distancing prompts and recall prompts are more difficult for children than completion, open-ended, and wh-prompts. Frequent use of distancing and recall prompts should be limited to four- and five-year-olds [8].

Virtually all children's books are appropriate for dialogic reading. The best books have rich detailed pictures, or are interesting to your child. Always follow your child's interest when sharing books with your child.

Dialogic reading works. Children who have been read to dialogically are substantially ahead of children who have been read to traditionally on tests of language development. Children can jump ahead by several months in just a few weeks of dialogic reading. We have found these effects with hundreds of children in areas as geographically different as New York, Tennessee, and Mexico, in settings as varied as homes, preschools, and daycare centers, and with children from economic backgrounds ranging from poverty to affluence.

Dialogic reading is just children and adults having a conversation about a book. Children will enjoy dialogic reading more than traditional reading as long as you mix-up your prompts with straight reading, vary what you do from reading to reading, and follow the child's interest. Keep it light. Don't push children with more prompts than they can handle happily.

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