

Developing English reading skills of secondary school students

Калько В.О. Розвиток англомовних умінь читання в учнів загальноосвітніх шкіл

Стаття присвячена проблемі розвитку умінь читання англійською мовою та навчання різних видів читання учнів загальноосвітніх шкіл. Описано види читання, яких навчають у загальноосвітніх навчальних закладах. Розглянуто прийоми навчання та види вправ і завдань для формування умінь вивчаючого, ознайомлювального і вибіркового читання. Запропоновано способи контролю розуміння прочитаного тексту. Наведені приклади прийомів роботи з текстами для читання з автентичних джерел.

Ключові слова: види читання, вміння англомовного читання, вправи для навчання читання, учні загальноосвітніх навчальних закладів.

Калько В. А. Развитие англоязычных умений чтения у учеников общеобразовательных школ

Статья посвящена проблеме развития умений чтения на английском языке и обучения разным видам чтения учеников общеобразовательных школ. Описаны виды чтения, которым обучают в общеобразовательных школах. Рассмотрены приемы обучения и виды упражнений и заданий для формирования умений обучающего, ознакомительного и поискового чтения. Предложены способы контроля понимания прочитанного текста. Даны примеры приемов работы с текстами для чтения из аутентичных источников.

Ключевые слова: виды чтения, умения англоязычного чтения, упражнения для обучения чтению, ученики общеобразовательных учебных заведений.

Kalko V. Developing English reading skills of secondary school students

The article deals with the problem of developing English reading skills of secondary school students and teaching them different types of reading. Different types of reading taught in secondary schools are studied. Different types of reading tasks, exercises and techniques for developing skimming, scanning and detailed comprehension are described. The examples of techniques for developing reading skills with the authentic texts are given.

Key words: types of reading, skills of English reading, exercises for developing skills in reading, students of secondary schools.

I. INTRODUCTION. Getting students to read English texts is an important part of the teacher's job. Many students want to be able to read in English either for study purposes or simply for pleasure. It must be a good idea to do anything we can do to make easier for them to do these things. Different means of testing the level of reading comprehension are suggested.

Reading is useful for language acquisition. Provided that students more or less understand what they read, the more they read, the better they get at it. Reading also has a positive effect on students' vocabulary knowledge, on their spelling and on their writing.

Reading texts also provide good models for English writing. At different times we can encourage students to focus on vocabulary, grammar or punctuation. We can also use reading material to demonstrate the way we construct sentences, paragraphs and whole texts. Lastly, good reading texts can introduce interesting topics, stimulate discussion, excite imaginative responses and provide the springboard for well-rounded, fascinating lessons [1].

II. SETTING OBJECTIVES. The main aim of the article is to study the problem of developing reading comprehension skills at secondary school. For this purpose the main tasks are: 1) to describe different types of reading; 2) to characterize reading skills and principles; 3) to give examples of various types of activities regarding developing reading comprehension skills.

III. RESULTS. It should be noted that a great number of methodologists, researchers and teachers have shown their particular interest in this field and there are some books, research papers and theses dealing with this problem (Abrams A. G., Brumfit Ch., Chernysh V.V., Collie J. and Strange D., Gordejeva A., Gusak Yu.A., Harmer J., Williams E., Young W.E. and others). Yet it cannot be considered to be fully solved.

Much further study is needed to clarify certain aspects of teaching reading to the students of secondary schools. So it is necessary to clarify the types of reading and skills that are developed at schools.

It is necessary to make a distinction between *extensive* and *intensive* reading. The term *extensive reading* refers to reading which students do often away from the classroom. They may read novels, web pages, newspapers, magazines or any other reference material. Where possible, extensive reading should involve reading for pleasure. This is enhanced if students have a chance to choose what they want to read, if they are encouraged to read by the teacher, and if some opportunity is given for them to share their reading experiences. Although not all students are equally keen on this kind of reading, we can say with certainty that the ones who read most progress fastest.

The term *intensive reading*, on the other hand, refers to the detailed focus on the construction of reading texts which takes place usually (but not always) in classroom. Teachers may ask students to look at extracts from magazines, poems, Internet websites, novels, newspapers, plays and a wide range of other genres.

Intensive reading is usually accompanied by study activities. We may ask students to work out what kind of text they are reading, tease out details of meaning, look at particular uses of grammar and vocabulary, and then

use the information in the text to move on to other learning activities. We also encourage them to reflect on different *reading skills*.

Students need to be able to do a number of things with reading the text. They need to be able *to scan* the text for particular bits of information they are searching for (as for example, when we look for a telephone number, what's on television at a certain time or search quickly through an article looking for a name or other detail). This skill means that they do not have to read every word and line; on the contrary, such an approach would stop them scanning successfully [1].

For *scanning* to be successful, students need to understand how the material is structured as well as comprehend what they read so they can locate the specific information they need. Scanning also allows them to find details and other information in a hurry. Besides, students should know more details about how to scan to make it easy. Establishing their purpose (keeping the concept of key words in mind while scanning), locating the appropriate material, and knowing how the information is structured (alphabetically, chronologically, non-alphabetically, by category, or textually) before they start scanning are essential.

Students also need to be able *to skim* a text – as they were casting their eyes over its surface – to get a general idea of what it is about (as, for example, when we run our eyes over a film review to see what the film is about and what the reviewer thought about it, or when we look quickly at a report to get a feel for the topic and what its conclusions are) [1].

Skimming is one of the tools we can use to read more in less time. To skim effectively, there has to be a structure but it isn't necessary to read everything. *What you read is more important than what you leave out*. Once your students know where the reading is headed, they begin to read only the first sentence of each paragraph. Also the called *topic sentences*, they give them the main idea of the paragraph. If they do not get the main idea in the topic sentence or if the paragraph greatly interests them, they may want to skim more. Since the last few paragraphs may contain a conclusion or summary, they should stop skimming there and read in detail. Remember that readers' overall comprehension will be lower than if they read in detail. If while skimming, they feel they are grasping the main ideas, then they are skimming correctly.

Reading for detailed comprehension, whether this entails looking for detailed information or picking out particular examples of language use, should be seen by students as something very different from the skills mentioned above.

Many students are perfectly capable of doing all these things in other languages, of course, though some may not read much at all in their lives. For both types of students, we should do our best to offer a mixture of materials and activities so that they can practise using these various skills with an English text. [1]

Developing students' reading skills teachers should take into account some **reading principles** which might be useful while teaching reading:

- Encourage students to read as often and as much as possible.
- Involve students in joyful reading outside lesson time to help them get as much pleasure from it as possible
- Encourage students to respond to the content of a text. They must have a chance to show their feelings about the topic
- Prediction is a major factor in reading. Teachers should give students "hints" so that they have a chance to predict what is coming. Book covers, photographs, headlines, web-page banners make our brain start predicting what we are going to read.
- Match the task to the topic when using intensive reading texts. Teachers need to choose good reading tasks – the right kind of questions, appropriate activities before, during and after reading.
- Good teachers exploit reading texts to the full. Good teachers integrate the reading text into interesting lesson sequences, using the topic for discussion and further tasks, using the language for study as well as a range of activities to bring the text to life [1].

Teaching English at secondary school we use the Enterprise 2 Elementary Coursebook by V.Evans [2].

In the following three examples, we are going to look at three different kinds of reading text and several different kinds of reading tasks for pre-intermediate students. As with all other skills work, it will be seen that reading often follows on from – or is followed by – work on other skills, such as listening, speaking and writing.

Reading for gist

Task 1. Look at the pictures that show causes of accidents children might have at home. Then read aloud the labels next to the pictures and match them to the results in the list and after that make up sentences, as in the example.



Results:

- fall and hurt themselves [C]
- drink them and poison themselves [G]
- get an electric shock [D]
- burn themselves [F]
- scalded themselves [A]
- cut themselves [E]
- fall in and drown [B]

Example: *Don't let children play near swimming pools. They might fall in and drown.*

Task 2. Listen to the text and complete the missing words in the following sentences.

1. K _ _ _ all cleaning products in a safe place.
2. P _ _ knives away after use.
3. Never a _ _ _ _ your children to play with pots and pans on the stove.
4. Make sure you c _ _ _ _ electrical sockets when they are not in use.
5. Never l _ _ _ your children play with matches.
6. F _ _ _ safety gates at the top and bottom of the stairs.
7. P _ _ a fence around any ponds or pools in your garden.

Task 3. First read the questions and the answers aloud. Then read the leaflet and circle the correct answers in five minutes.

Is Your Home A Safe Place For Your Kids?

Every year, thousands of children are injured in accidents in the home – accidents that could be prevented. Read this leaflet and make sure that similar accidents don't happen to your children.

- Keep all cleaning products in a safe place. Your children might drink them and poison themselves.
- Always put knives and other sharp objects away after use. Your children could cut themselves.
- Never allow your children to play with pots and pans on the stove. They could scald themselves.
- Make sure you cover electrical sockets when they are not in use. Your children could give themselves an electric shock.
- Never let your children play with matches. They might start a fire and burn themselves.
- Fit safety gates at the top and bottom of the stairs. Your children could fall and hurt themselves.
- Put a fence around any ponds or pools in your garden. Your children might fall in and drown.

1. Who is the leaflet for?
 - a. Parents with young children
 - b. New home owners
2. What does the leaflet give advice about?
 - a. Keeping your home clean
 - b. Preventing accidents
3. What does the leaflet advise readers to do?
 - a. Make sure children don't play with dangerous objects.
 - b. Teach children to follow rules about safety

The teacher checks students' answers. The class then listens to the recording again to follow the text.

Task 4. Take it in turns to ask and answer questions, first in open pairs, then in closed pairs.

Example: SA: *Why should we keep all cleaning products in a safe place?*

SB: *Because children might drink them and poison themselves.*

There are numbers of activation possibilities with this text in terms of language development.

Task 5. Fill in the words from the list to make sentences using the completed phrases (cleaning products, sharp objects, electrical sockets, etc). Then complete sentences with the correct prepositions (injured in accidents, happen to sb, keep smth in a safe place, etc) and after that make up sentences.

As consolidation, the students study the leaflet again, and then the teacher asks them to cover the text and talk about the dangerous situations in the pictures and possible results.

Task 6. Study the leaflet again, and cover the text and talk about the dangerous situations in the pictures and possible results.

Reading for specific information

The sequence starts when students are asked to look quickly at the signs and the headlines. Then the teacher asks the students to read them aloud explaining any unknown words. After that the class matches the headlines to the signs. Finally, the teacher checks the task.

1 CHILD SAVED FROM DROWNING IN POND

2 BRITISH SKIER TRAPPED IN SNOW

3 VISIT TO BEACH ENDS IN FALL ONTO ROCKS

A **DANGER**
DO NOT CLIMB THE CLIFFS

B **NOTICE**
DO NOT SKI ON UNMARKED SLOPES

C **SAFETY FIRST**
DO NOT LET YOUNG CHILDREN PLAY ALONE NEAR WATER

Skimming, scanning and reading for detailed understanding

Task 1. First, skim the texts and insert the appropriate headlines.

Task 2. Explain the meaning of the new words in bold (if you have any difficulties in your mother tongue).

Task 3. Listen to the recording and follow the texts.

Task 4. Read the texts quickly and find the relevant information then answer the questions.

Which report (s) mention (s) someone who

1. was involved in an accident yesterday?
2. went somewhere alone?
3. was injured when he/she was on holiday?
4. was playing when the accident happened?
5. was near water? [A] [B]

Key: 1. [A] [B] 2. [C] 3. [C] 4. 5. [A]

A
 1 Six-year-old Pamela Kinsey nearly drowned in a pond in Carlton Park, Coddleton, yesterday afternoon.
 2 The accident **occurred** at 3:30 pm as Pamela and her nine-year-old brother were playing at the edge of the pond. When his sister fell into the pond, Kyle, who cannot swim, ran to get help. He was afraid she would drown. Fortunately, the **park warden** managed to **save** little Pamela.
 3 **Since** the accident, Coddleton Council has **put up** a high **fence** around the pond. **Local police** are **warning** parents not to let young children play alone near water.

B
 42-year-old Marcus Hirst was injured when he fell onto rocks on a beach near Dover yesterday morning. Mr Hirst was on a day trip to the beach with his wife and two young children when he decided to climb the cliffs in search of birds' eggs. He fell from a **height** of about twelve metres onto the rocks below. His wife called the **ambulance service** on her **mobile phone** and Mr Hirst was taken to hospital in a Coastguard helicopter. He had a broken leg and arm, but **suffered** no other injuries. Since the accident, the Coastguard has put up signs on the beach warning people not to climb the cliffs.

C
 Robert Blakewell, a twenty-year-old student from Sussex, was trapped in a deep **snowdrift** in the French Alps on Tuesday. Robert was on holiday with some college friends at an Albertville ski resort when he decided to go skiing alone and away from the main slopes of the resort. His friends **contacted the authorities** when Robert failed to return that evening. A mountain rescue team managed to find Robert and take him to the nearest hospital. After the accident, the Mountain Rescue Service **released a statement to the press**, asking skiers not to ski on unmarked slopes.

Task 5. Look at one of the news reports again and answer the questions:

1. Which paragraph describes the event in detail?
2. Which paragraph gives a summary of the event?
3. Which paragraph is about the action taken?

Task 6. Make notes for each under the headings below then talk about each of the accidents.

1. Who? What? Where? When?
2. Details of the Event
3. Action Taken

As consolidation, the teacher asks the class what they would say to: a young child playing near a pond/ a teenager going skiing/ a man going bird-watching near a beach?

Task 7. What would you say to: a young child playing near a pond/ a teenager going skiing/ a man going bird-watching near a beach? Give some advice, using must or mustn't.

IV CONCLUSION. To sum up, in the article we have studied the types of reading comprehensions taught at secondary schools. We described different types of reading tasks, exercises and techniques for developing skimming, scanning and detailed comprehension. The examples of techniques for developing reading skills with the authentic texts were given. We suggested that the more students read, the better they get at reading because it is good for language acquisition in general. Besides, reading provides good models for future writing and offers opportunities for language study. We have made a distinction between intensive and extensive reading, stressing the beneficial affects of the latter. Teacher should encourage students to read in a variety of genres and that, where possible, the language of the texts should be authentic, unless it is too difficult for students. Students need to realise how to read for different purposes, including skimming, scanning, reading for detailed comprehension.

It is quite obvious that it is impossible to describe the whole system of the techniques, exercises and activities to develop English reading skills of secondary school students and to describe all possible ways of teaching them to read in English. The matter of development English reading skills is not fully decided yet. Here we are faced with a formidable task to precise the levels and sublevels of development English reading skills and to correlate them with the years of studying at school. It would be of great interest to develop and describe the language descriptors of each level and sublevel and precise relevant qualitative and quantitative parameters for reading for each one.

References

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