
**THE USE OF SKILLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND DEVELOPING A BASIS FOR
READING AND LEARNING**

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Abstract: This theme:” The Use of Skills and particularly Developing a Basis for Reading and Learning” is very broad, interesting, challenging and very useful at the same time. It is very useful for teachers and students during lectoral exercises which require a joint effort of participating interactively in class in order to be more efficient, flexible and pragmatic in order to achieve the main goal of learning and improving English Language. This source of information is useful for native speakers as well as for us, that are learning and improving English Language as a second language that intend to be future teachers or interpreters from English to respective languages.

To Learn and improve English language are used the four main skills: Listening, Reading, Speaking (Communicating) and Writing. During lectures in order to practice and elaborate each of the skills, teachers and students encounter into different situations that in order to answer or conduct one of the skills you will have to answer and imply flexibility and efficiency by giving answers by all the other subjects which I consider an interweave of grammar, morphology, syntax, phonology, and for style of language explanations from theory of literature. And to grasp the main purpose or idea of the author to have general knowledge of different fields in life such as social, psychological, economical, historical ect.

Through this paper work I will try to demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of using the first main skill which is Reading, how to analyze the reading efficiency and learning style, how to develop the reading flexibility, principles of efficiency, evaluating the rate of reading and flexibility the factors that have impact in reading efficiently. Shortly as well is mentioned critical thinking and active reading which guides toward thinking and improving concentration. Finally, how to monitor comprehension the factors that impact upon reading which require pre-reading, rereading and prediction to retain elevating results.

Keywords: efficiency, flexibility, comprehension, principle and factors.

English Language is one of the main languages of communication around the world for the mere fact of world globalization. Thus, because of globalization, in order to communicate worldwide in English Language, from all other language speakers that come from a diversity of cultures and clash of cultures in their use of English Language bring in this diversity and clash of culture as a part of the English Language that has an impact or difference of use to native speakers. It is considered that in the world exist more non-native speakers that use English than native speakers. And because of the above mentioned diversity allows non-native speakers to be themselves and each and every one of them brings in something of their own.

To learn and improve English Language are used the four main skills: Listening, Reading, Speaking (communication) and Writing. Within each skill other (forms)disciplines or subjects are used to give explanations of the use of style of language, of the vocabulary as part of enrichment of the language, words and word phrases, we use grammar, phonology, morphology, syntax, word formation, theory of literature, stylistic figures, spelling, dictation, essays and others an interweave of all the above mentioned to learn and improve English Language.

This is a very wide topic and it cannot be included entirely on one paper work. In this paper is discussed and focused the skill of Reading that includes listening and comprehension. What are the basis for reading and learning? Here most of the facts and arguments are based according to a study done from a book with the title: “Efficient & Flexible Reading” by the Author: Kathleen T. McWhorter., the Eighth edition, copyright© 2008, Niagara County Community College. This book was given to me by the staff in Middleton Community College, Connecticut,USA , a textbook used by instructors and students.

To succeed in college students must learn to understand a wide variety of reading material, textbooks and the primary reading material represent unique academic disciplines, each with its own style, content and conceptual complexity. Students are required to read literature, supplementary assignments, reference material, periodicals, manuals, handbooks and study guides. They also read online. The internet is growing into its importance and students regard it as a primary source of information and means of communication. Each of these materials offers unique reading challenges and even more important the student’s purpose of reading each is different. Reading to prepare an exam as a main objective or for a class lecture or an essay and so on. To handle these diverse reading

situations effectively, a student must develop reading flexibility, adjusting strategies and techniques to suit each reading situation.

And to conduct and suit these situations readers are required to cope with time and restraints created by different obligations as well. Reading and study must be accomplished within a realistic time frame and result in effective reading. Reading and efficiency, then is also vitally important. The book “Efficient and flexible reading” helps readers of any kind (students, teachers, leisure readers) to become efficient and flexible readers to be capable of facing any challenging demands. The primary goal is to teach readers, reading tasks within an efficient and realistic framework. How to guide readers in developing flexibility- adjusting both comprehension and rate to suit the purpose, type and complexity of the material, as well as the degree of familiarity. Secondly, a more specific goal is to encourage students/readers to develop successful academic reading strategies. To enable readers to learn more efficiently books and electronic texts, here are mentioned and focused on the development of vocabulary, comprehension, study and critical analysis techniques. And the third goal is to encourage readers to approach reading as a thinking process. Metacomprehension- the reader’s awareness of the control over reading and learning process and its attendant thought process.

Efficient and flexible reading is a blend of reading comprehension, retention, vocabulary development, critical reading and rate building techniques that have proven essential for readers / college students.

The **term efficiency** refers to the ability to perform with minimum amount of effort, expense or waste. Efficiency involves the effective use of time or resources to accomplish a specific task. Because as mentioned by the author Kathleen T. McWorter: The more we think about it we begin to realize that it is a major objective in our work and time oriented society.

Kathleen T. McWorter instructs readers through these four 4 major points:

1. **To analyze your reading efficiency and flexibility.**
2. **To assess your reading style.**
3. **The factors that affect rate and comprehension.**
4. **The basic principles that govern efficiency and flexibility.**

For the first point to analyze your reading efficiency and flexibility, to become more efficient means to get more done in less time. Many readers think that the only way to become more efficient is to read faster. They believe that slow reading is poor reading. This is not true. “How” you read is more important than how “fast” you read. For example if you read a 12 – page assignment in one hour but remember only 60% of what you read, you are not reading efficiently. Efficient reading involves adequate comprehension and recall within a reasonable time frame. Reading efficiency increases as you develop techniques that improve your comprehension and retention which will enable you to use your time economically. According to the Efficiency questionnaire of ten questions you would know where yo position yourself as a reader:

Efficiency

Questionnaire

yes

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1. Do you set your goals and time limits for yourself at the beginning of each reading study session? | |
| 2. Do you have particular questionnaire in mind as you begin to read an assignment? | Yes/No |
| 3. Do you spend a few minutes looking over an assignment before you begin reading it? | Yes/no |
| 4. When reading do you try to predict or anticipate what the writer will say next? | Yes/No |
| 5. When you finish writing an assignment, do you take a few minutes to review what you have written? | Yes/No |
| 6. Are you in the alert of words and phrases that signal change or continuation in thought? | Yes/No |
| 7. Do you sort out more and less important details as you read? | Yes /No |
| 8. When you read a word you do not know, do you try to determine its meaning from the way it is used in the sentence? | Yes/No |
| 9. Do you regularly use underlining summary notes and marginal notations to identify Important information? | Yes /No |
| 10. When reading non-text material, do you try to determine the author’s purpose writing? | Yes /No of |

If answered “Yes” to all or most of the questions you are well on the way to become an efficient reader. **If answered “No”** to some or many questions, you need to improve your efficiency.

How you can become an efficient and flexible reader by varying your reading techniques to suit the material and purpose of reading it? Some of the specific approaches are Analyzing the learning style.

It is important to take information efficiently through reading but it is equally important that you study and learn that material efficiently. It will be helpful to choose the learning strategies that will help a reader learn the largest amount of material in the least amount of time. Not everyone learns in the same way, and not all reading and learning strategies are equally effective for everyone. Each person has his/her own unique way of learning which is called Learning Style. Some students/readers tend to be “applied learners” who prefer to learning tasks that reflect practical, real-life situations. Other students/readers may be “Conceptual Learners” who enjoy working with concepts and ideas. Practical applications are unnecessary for understanding. Some students/readers tend to be “Spatial Learners”. Who work well with visual material, charts, diagrams, maps, and so forth. Others tend to be “Verbal Learners” who tend to work well with language, which means chart, maps diagrams are put into words. Assessing learning style is presented in five parts:

Part one: Auditory or Visual Learners

This kind of learning means one learns more effectively by listening (auditory) or by seeing (visual). Listening auditory learners, one tends to learn more easily by hearing than by reading. Visual learners tend or suggests learning with visual modes of learning- reading, studying picture, reading diagrams and so forth..

Part two: Applied or Conceptual Learners

Applied learners prefer tasks that involve real objects and situations. Practical, real-life examples are the ideal for applied learners. Conceptual Learners prefer to work with language and ideas and practical applications are not needed for understanding.

Part three: Spatial and Verbal Learners

Are the ones that reveal their ability to work with spatial relationships. Spatial learners are able to visualize or mentally see how things work or how they are positioned in space. Their strength may include drawings assembling or repairing thing. Verbal learners lack skill in positioning things in space. Instead they rely on verbal or language skills.

Part four: Social or Independent Learners – tend to work or read and learn alone or with others. Social learners prefer to work with others- both classmates and instructors closely and directly. Social learners tend to be people oriented and enjoy personal interaction. Independent learners prefer to work and study alone. They tend to be self-directed or self-motivated and often goal oriented.

Part five: Creative or Pragmatic Learners

Creative learners are imaginative and innovative; they prefer to learn through discovery or experimentation. Also creative learners are comfortable taking risks and following hunches. **Pragmatic learners** are practical, logical, and systematic. They seek order and are comfortable following rules.

In order to develop a learning action plan, even if you are an auditory learner you will have to read your assignments which is a usual task. However, to learn the assignment you should translate the material into an auditory form. For example, to repeat aloud using your own words information that you want to remember, you could tape record key information and play it back. If you are a social learner you could work with a classmate, testing each other aloud.

Developing Reading Flexibility- Not every kind of material is read the same way, for example reading a newspaper is not read in the same way and at the same speed a chemistry book; or poetry/ with an article in a magazine! Many adults even graduate students surprisingly answer yes, they read everything in the same way and at the same rate.

Efficient and flexible readers, however, read the newspaper both faster and differently than they would read a chemistry book, because the newspaper is usually easier to read and because they have a different purpose for reading each. Flexible readers read poetry more slowly and in a different way than they would read a magazine articles. So, your ability to adjust your reading rate and methods to suit the type of material you are reading and your purpose for reading it, is called: “Flexible Reading”.

To become a flexible reader, you make decisions about how you will read a given piece of material. “How” you read it depends on “Why” you are reading it and “how much” you intend to remember. Rate and comprehension are the two most important factors. Think of them as weights on a balancing scale: as one increases the other decreases. Your goal is to achieve a balance that suits the nature of the material and the purpose of reading. How to achieve this balance? By assessing difficulty, by defining your purpose, assessing your skills and abilities, by your background knowledge, By your physical and mental state, by your interest level, by your reading skills and by varying your rate and comprehension:

Assessing Difficulty- which means to determine how to read a given piece of material or writing is to assess its difficulty. Many features of the reading material itself influences how quickly you can read it and here are some important characteristics

1. **The format:** the physical arrangement of a page can influence how easily the material can be read, For example: it is more difficult to read a page that is solid black of print than is to read a page which the ideas are broken up by headings, spacing and listing.
2. **Graphics and visual material-** The inclusion of maps, pictures, graphs and charts also may influence your reading. Graphic elements present detailed information and require close up study.
3. **Typographical aids:** Features of print such as bold, italics, colored type, and headings often make a page easier to understand. Heading announce the topic about to be discussed and together form an outline of ideas covered in the material. Words in italics, boldface, or colored type emphasize certain words and phrases.
4. **Language Features:** factors such as sentence length, paragraph length and vocabulary level determine how difficult a piece of material is to read. Generally, the longer the sentences and paragraphs in a selection, the more difficult they are to read.
5. **Subject Matter:** the type and number of ideas and concepts that an author presents influence difficulty. For instance, a passage that explains a complicated scientific theory or procedure requires close reading. Material that discusses everyday newsworthy topics normally requires less careful attention. Also a passage that explains one new idea is easier to read than a passage that represents three or four separate new ideas in the same amount of space.
6. **Length:** Long chapters, articles and essays are often difficult to read than shorter ones. Lengthy materials demand sustained concentration and require you to relate larger numbers of ideas and to maintain a broader focus and perspective.
7. **Organization:** Some material progress in an orderly, logical fashion from point to point. Others are more loosely organized and the writers pattern of thought is more difficult to identify. As a general rule, the less clearly organized material is, it is more difficult to read.

The easiest way to assess the difficulty of a selection is to pre-read it. Pre-reading reveals how well organized the material is and gives the reader a feeling for the difficulty of the language and content. Once you have made a quick estimate of the material's difficulty, you can adjust your reading rate accordingly.

No rule tells a reader how much to slow down or to speed up. You must use your judgement and adjust to conditions at hand. For example, you can slow down if you encounter a passage with long complicated sentences or an article that presents complex ideas or uses technical vocabulary. You can speed up the material if you come across simple straightforward ideas and everyday vocabulary. To adjust your rate, you should alter the manner in which you read the material, using different techniques to suit different type of material. And here are described the techniques designed to increase your efficiency and flexibility.³¹(A detailed explanation is presented on Table 1.2 The relationship Among Purpose, Rate and Comprehension, page 13)

You have to define your purpose. Your purpose for reading a particular piece should influence how you read it. Different situations require different levels of comprehension and recall. For example, you may not need to recall every fact when leisurely reading an article in the newspaper, but you do need a high level of comprehension when reading a contract to sign, or a psychology assignment which require close reading in preparation for an objective exam. Your reading can range from paying careful, close attention to a very brief, quick reading for only main ideas. Then, as your comprehension varies, so does your reading rate. If close, careful comprehension is not required, you can read faster. You will generally find that as your comprehension decreases, your reading rate increases. Other techniques are: **assessing your skills and abilities.** What field of science your major is, you are likely to be more successful than the ones that you are not, which will require more time and effort for research and learning.

Your background knowledge- The amount of knowledge you have about the topic, influences how easily and quickly you will be able to read about it. If you have completed a given assignment for a certain field is more easily and if never have resolved one before it would be more difficult.

Your physical and mental state – how you feel physically can all affect your ability to read and concentrate.

³¹ Mcworter, Kathleen T; Efficient & Flexible Reading, Pearson Longman, USA,2008, p. 13

Your interest level – Most people have little difficulty understanding and remembering material if the subject is highly interesting. Interest can improve comprehension and rate; a lack of interest or motivation can have a negative effect.

Your reading skills- Your ability to comprehend directly influences how well and how fast you are able to read a given page. Your vocabulary is also an important factor. If your vocabulary is limited, you will encounter numerous unfamiliar words that will impair your comprehension and slow your reading down. On the other hand, an extensive well developed vocabulary will enable you to grasp the meaning accurately and rapidly.

Varying your rate and comprehension – Materials should not be read in the same way or with the same level of comprehension. You should select a level of comprehension appropriate for what you are reading and why you are reading it. If you are preparing a chapter to pass an objective exam, based on that chapter your purpose is to learn all the important facts and ideas, and you need a very high level of comprehension and recall.

This is only an approach of the first phase of reading and comprehension, which can be further analyzed and studied from different points of view, that will be useful to student and teachers. Further readings are critical thinking, but critical thinking is not meant in the negative point of view, but instead, it means having a curious questioning and open mind about a certain material that require active reading, pre-reading, prediction or anticipation, close reading which all have to be thoroughly discussed and considered as the second phase of reading.

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