NEW APPROACHES
TO TEACHING READING TEXTS AT SENIOR STAGE

Annotation: The relevance of the article is due to the fact that teaching reading at the senior stage poses certain difficulties. The article considers effective approaches to teaching reading in high school. The methods of engaging lowly motivated students have been suggested.

Key words: guided reading, independent reading, reciprocal learning, motivation.

Reading is considered to be one of the most essential students skills to be developed. Reading is a complex process and takes many efforts to make it exciting and entertaining. We know that nowadays students especially at senior stage are not eager reading, because there are many different sources of information. Therefore, teachers have to use many effective teaching approaches to
attract students’ attention to reading. Effective teachers have an understanding of this complexity and are able to use a range of teaching approaches that produce confident and independent readers. It sounds to be quite challenging. Therefore teachers are looking forward the ways to spark students’ interest in reading. There are fewer problems with primary school students to engage them reading.

New approaches to teaching reading at senior stage

Engaging students at senior stage to reading sounds to be challenging, therefore teachers are trying to choose the new approaches to teaching reading at senior stage. Teachers involve students to develop the knowledge, strategies, and awareness required to become effective readers. According to researches of Department of Education and Skills of New Zealand Government the following new approaches to reading are suggested: Guided Reading, Independent Reading, Reciprocal approach to teaching Reading [1], [2]. All these approaches enhance students’ reading capability. Let us look at each new approach separately.

Guided reading

Guided reading promotes students’ independent reading [11]. The students work in small groups which enables the teacher to give strategic instruction in making meaning from and thinking critically about increasingly complex texts (and to teach or reinforce decoding strategies when necessary). The teacher has the possibility to work with each student at an appropriate level in order to meet his or her specific learning needs. This way teacher makes reading much more purposeful and enjoyable for students by helping them make meaning from texts, deepening their comprehension, and developing their critical-thinking skills. The teacher helps the students read the text themselves. During guided reading, students often apply or practice reading strategies and skills that have been introduced to them through shared reading [11].

In a guided reading session, the teacher works with a small group of students who have similar instructional needs so that they are supported in reading a text successfully by themselves. Each student has a copy of the text. It should contain
some challenges at a level that the students can manage as they individually read the text in the supportive situation. It would generally contain fewer challenges than a shared reading text for that group. Guided reading is relevant to lower-achievers who have some challenges in reading.

The students take responsibility for reading the text by themselves. While monitoring each member of the group, the teacher should intervene only when necessary. Teacher supports by prompting, explaining and modeling, because it is challenging for some students to generate purposeful and stimulating conversation. The teacher helps students to deal with complicated vocabulary and gives constructive feedback that is specific, informative, and builds further understanding. By supporting students, the teacher engages in genuine conversations about texts with students and encourage such conversations among them, for example, by using “think, pair, and share”. In guided reading, all students are engaged due to their level of knowledge. For example, early finishers could find and think about a part of the text they really like or form questions to ask others about the text. While the rest of the guided reading group is reading a set part of the text with teachers support, the target student can be asked to work on a computer, perhaps using a commercially produced CD-ROM, with the goal of developing and demonstrating specific reading or writing skills that they will need for research in social studies.

**Independent reading**

Independent reading is considered to be relaxed and enjoyable. Independent reading is the single biggest predictor of student literacy success [7]. And yet, in most classrooms today, students are spending as little as ten to fifteen minutes actually reading [2]. The benefits of independent reading are bountiful: students develop extensive vocabularies, build stamina, acquire problem-solving skills, and understand how reading works. We can support independent reading initiatives by providing our students, teachers, and families with motivating and engaging authentic text in all content areas; helping our teachers with ideas to provide more
time, space, and support for independent reading with a focus on comprehension; and provide strategies for students to engage in rich and rigorous conversations about text. If we want students to continue reading, it must be fun. Independent reading should be fun and purposeful [2].

Students are given a lot of choice to read the texts they want. The main reason of students’ unwilling to read the fact that they are not interested in reading suggested texts, because they find these texts boring. There is nothing more gratifying than seeing a student, who has found the perfect hook or has discovered an author she can call her own. Beyond selecting books for reading, we promote many forms of mini-choices that can be applied in every lesson. For example, students can choose which piece of a text to read. In a novel, a student may select one character about whom to specialize. She becomes expert on what this character does, thinks, and feels. It is her character. While she may know all the characters, the plot, and the theme, she nevertheless claims ownership of a significant slice of the novel. In an information book reading activity, students can select a significant concept in which to specialize. In a lesson on non-fiction, a teacher may assign which page to read in a short section of a hook. Students can read to explain their section to the team or the class. The main essential moment in this approach that students get a lot of benefits, because independent reading helps them develop their reading preferences, extends their background knowledge, including topic-related knowledge, extends their vocabulary and develops their comprehension skills, builds their confidence in attempting more fascinating and enjoyable texts. Studies have documented evidence linking students’ access to texts, and the amount of reading that they do, to their achievement in reading. Choosing to read recreationally is also associated with high rates of achievement.

A set time in the daily routine for independent reading is an essential part of the classroom literacy programme. If they are to become lifelong readers, students need opportunities to select their own texts, read them, and share what they have read. Ready access to a wide range of interesting and challenging texts (including
fiction and non-fiction texts in various print and electronic forms) enables students to choose to read independently when opportunities arise. Teachers need to make it clear that students benefit when they read for pleasure, whether in or out of school. Students achieve better, when they see their teacher reading independently for pleasure.

The teacher needs to establish routines and expectations for any regular independent reading sessions. For example, students should be able to select enjoyable texts at an appropriate level, sustain their engagement in the text during the session, and read silently or join in focused conversation if appropriate. It is good practice to give students opportunities to share their views on self-selected texts. For discovering students preferences teachers deliver survey and give students instructions what is the best way to choose the texts. However, it is important at all times for the teacher to avoid being intrusive – independent reading is intensely personal and should focus on enjoyment and empowerment.

**Reciprocal approach to teaching reading**

Reciprocal teaching of reading is a useful small-group procedure that helps develop the comprehension and critical thinking of fluent and independent readers [11]. Studies have shown that when students take part in reciprocal teaching, their comprehension (including their listening comprehension) improves and they apply the learning to other reading contexts. Reciprocal teaching has been found to be effective in improving the achievement of learners from diverse backgrounds. It involves four explicit strategies for reading comprehension:

- formulating questions to stimulate thoughtful discussion;
- clarifying ideas and information in the text;
- predicting what might follow, using prior knowledge and information in the text;
- summarizing information in the text.

The teacher initially leads the group, explaining and modeling the strategies to show how the reader actively constructs meaning. The students gradually take
over more and more of the responsibility by taking turns to lead the group and generate discussion as the group members jointly examine and interpret the text.

Teachers practicing the art of relevance enable students to connect the hooks of instruction to their lives. Teachers should provide hands-on activity to generate interest in reading. In both primary and intermediate levels, research supports the power of motivational and emotional support for building motivation. A nationwide observational study of primary classrooms showed that when teachers were sensitive to student interests, invited student input into classroom decisions, and avoided harsh criticism, students gained in reading achievement. Decker, Dona, and Christenson presented further evidence that teacher-student relationships in the classroom may be important to engagement and achievement in literacy.

Motivation stimulates people to actions in order to accomplish the goals. If there is no motivation, it is difficult to achieve goals. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (2011), states that positive attitude and motivation are vital for progression in literacy and numeracy. It also states that «… all learners should benefit from the opportunity to experience the joy and excitement of getting ‘lost’ in a book (in both paper based and digital formats)» [1]. Motivated readers require a safe, supportive classroom environment, one in which both the physical aspects and the culture encourages opportunities to use and combine printed, spoken, visual and digital texts [10].

In addition, the question how to motivate students at senior stage worries many teachers because at senior stage students become reluctant and passive. PDST suggests providing students with:

- interesting and rich texts
- choice of text
- authentic purposes for reading
- opportunities to explore, interact and experiment with text.

Motivation as a key to successful reading
In order to motivate readers, teachers should create a safe and supportive classroom environment, where students have lots of opportunities to use and combine printed, spoken, visual and digital texts. This way students benefit from such an environment that allows them to feel confident, in sharing texts, in responding openly to texts and in working collaboratively with each other. If students are provided with, a broad range of reading material matched to children’s stages of development and interests and they have their own choice to select books on their own and share their ideas on the books they have read and share their likes and dislikes they only benefit of it. The level of motivation will surely benefit of it.

NCCA suggests the following ideas of motivating students:

1. Reading time: Establish a time for independent reading. Share with pupils which reading material you enjoy.
2. Sharing: Give students opportunity to share their ideas after reading the text.
3. Using Fads: Make literacy links to current fads/trends such as current sporting events.
4. Films and TV: Provide opportunities for students to explore reading material related to appropriate films/TV programmes.
5. Inventories/surveys: Distribute a questionnaire at the start of the year to help select motivating material based on student’s interests.
6. Class-created Books: Make a class book with sections dedicated to favourite jokes, riddles or songs, etc. If your school has been involved in the “Write a Book” competition, display books from the competition.
7. TV vs. Reading: Create a chart recording time students spend reading vs. watching TV at home. Jointly formulate guidelines for earning incentives, e.g. Class reading time – TV time – Reward!

Motivation is the key source of progress. Levels of motivation and engagement have been found to predict achievement [3] and as such are key factors in determining children’s academic success. In order to involve
unmotivated students into reading teachers are trying to select the books according their interests. If students are given boring texts it is impossible to make them reading. There is no good reader without will. We talk about three powerful motivations that drive students' reading. They operate in school and out of school, and they touch nearly every child. Some students may have all of these motivations and some may have only one. For some students, these motivations appear in the positive form driving students toward reading. For other students, the motivations are negative and push students away from books. When we talk about reading motivations, we refer to 1) interest, 2) dedication, and 3) confidence. An interested student reads because he enjoys it; a dedicated student reads because he believes it is important, and a confident student reads because he really enjoys it. If teachers manage to combine interest, dedication and confidence they really benefit in involving students at senior stage into reading.

REFERENCES


