

Using different techniques and strategies to improve English reading skills: A review of literature

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Abstract

This article explores the various strategies employed by effective readers throughout the stages of skimming, scanning, prediction-making, questioning, pre-reading, reading, and post-reading in language learning classrooms. The study aims to discern the techniques utilized in learning and teaching effective English reading skills. It emphasizes the importance of learners mastering techniques for efficiently skimming and scanning texts, as well as making accurate predictions and posing insightful questions. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of teachers' strong understanding of the procedures required to teach reading skills and create comprehensive lesson plans to improve English reading skills. Ways to improve could include incorporating a range of reading materials to meet various learning styles, promoting a supportive learning environment that motivates interaction with texts, and offering plenty of guided practice and feedback opportunities.

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1. Introduction

Reading is not simply a passive act, but rather a dynamic system of interaction between the reader and the material, in which graphic knowledge converges with the reader's social and circumstantial factors. Defined as the capacity to read, comprehend, and interpret written words on a page or any other reading material, reading skills are essential for processing information efficiently. Possessing strong reading skills empowers individuals to navigate written works rapidly and effectively (Sari et al., 2019).

Moreover, developing proficient reading skills is a lifelong endeavor, with self-study serving as a cornerstone activity in this process. As individuals engage thoughtfully with the content to grasp the writer's intended messages, critical thinking plays a pivotal role during reading (Kucukoglu, 2013). Cultivating a habit of constant reading is indispensable for improving reading skills over time (Em et al., 2022).

As Ahmmed (2016) suggested, reading English newspapers proves particularly beneficial for learners, as it exposes them to new vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and sentence structures, thereby enhancing their language proficiency. To facilitate effective comprehension strategies,

it is essential to equip teachers with the knowledge and tools necessary to teach their students effectively (Kucukoglu, 2013).

Therefore, there is a need for teachers to prioritize the development of comprehensive methodologies, and guide students on how to employ these strategies to maximize learning outcomes. They need to be well-versed in constructing effective comprehension methodologies and advising these strategies to their students (Kucukoglu, 2013). By integrating diverse reading materials to cater to different learning styles, fostering a supportive learning environment, and providing ample opportunities for guided practice and feedback, teachers can enhance their students' reading proficiency and overall language acquisition (Keo et al., 2022).

1.1. Importance of English

English has become the most widespread means of communication in the world since the beginning of the Second World War (need reference). In this modern era, people achieve success in their specialized areas because they make use of the available resources of fast-evolving technologies (Em & Mao, 2022). To make use of these technologies and apply their thoughts in the right way, there is a need for a common language to communicate with the people of other regions and countries in the world. To bridge this gap, English seems to be a good tool used for communication as it is an international language. English is the only language that is widely used in various fields, such as science and technology, engineering, medicine, pharmacy, education, tourism, entertainment, information and communication technology, business, trade, commerce, Internet, and employment, to name a few. As a language, English attains global status and is used to serve various purposes (Rao, 2019; Sor et al., 2022).

Moreover, English is crucial for some reasons. It is a language used in academia and is a universal language. It provides us with access to a multitude of textual materials, both printed and online. It is practical for traveling. It is necessary if you wish to operate in global business or commerce (Aziza, 2020). English language, according to Kim (2020), plays a significant part in people's lives since it enables them to speak to a majority of people on the planet in addition to their friends and relatives. Moreover, it is the language that is studied the most across all learning levels in the world. The benefits of learning English for students include expanding their horizons (Short, 1994). Thus, if the students are good at the English language, especially reading, they benefit a lot from it.

1.2. English history in Cambodia

The evolution of English language education in Cambodia has undergone significant transformations over the decades. Between 1970 and 1975, English was introduced into Cambodia during the Khmer Republic or Lon Nol regime, and it was included in the national curriculum (Neau, 2003). However, the advent of the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979 resulted in the suppression of English language education, along with other foreign languages. The teaching and learning of English and French were strictly prohibited, and individuals engaging in such activities were subject to detention due to their association with perceived communist tendencies (Neau, 2003). This period marked a stark interruption in the development of English education in Cambodia (Em & Mao, 2022).

In the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge era, there was a gradual reintegration of foreign language education, with French initially taking precedence, followed by Vietnamese, Russian, and

eventually English. Despite the initial restrictions, foreign language teaching gained momentum over time. However, it was not until the presence of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in the 1990s that the value of English education as a means of survival and employment began to be recognized (Chan, 2018). UNTAC's influence heralded a shift in perspective, leading to a reevaluation of the importance of English language skills worldwide (Em & Mao, 2022).

Following the 1993 elections supported by UNTAC, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) initiated efforts to integrate English into the national curriculum, spanning from lower secondary school to higher education. This marked a significant milestone in the formalization and institutionalization of English language education in Cambodia. To date, English has become a staple in both domestic and international educational institutions, ranging from kindergarten to higher education levels. Many private educational institutions have also adopted English as the medium of instruction, further contributing to its popularity among Cambodian students. This evolution underscores the resilience and adaptability of English language education in Cambodia, reflecting its growing importance in the country's educational landscape (Phann et al., 2023). Therefore, The development of English-language education in Cambodia was characterized by its suppression during the Khmer Rouge regime and subsequent revitalization after the UNTAC period. Various institutions have widely embraced it and incorporated it into the curriculum, highlighting its growing significance in the country's educational system.

2. Reading techniques

2.1. Skimming

Skimming is a reading manner for fast reading. The goal of skimming is to get an overview of the preparation of the text and its main idea from a quotation in a book. To skim a paragraph, the readers read through the portion quickly and skip the details. They read the first structure of each paragraph. Each paragraph usually involves a topic sentence that affirms the main idea (Banditvilai, 2020). Skimming is done at a speed three to four times faster than usual reading (need ref). Moreover, readers often skim when they have commonalities of materials to read a limited number of times. In skimming, readers only have to take the most important clues and the main idea rather than read all of the words (Muddin & Rahayamtel, 2018). The authors also provide the procedure of the skimming techniques in three strides as follows (Abdelrahman & Bsharah, 2014).

- a. Read the first structure of the paragraph.
- b. Read the last structure of the paragraph.
- c. Read main words in between.

2.2. Scanning

Scanning is a reading skills that allow the readers to detect definite information (Banditvilai, 2020). With scanning, we already know before we begin what sort of information we are searching for. Scanning aims to get definite information. Scanning is chiefly useful for increasing our reading speed. Scanning can help learners learn to read and understand the meanings faster (Banditvilai, 2020). Scanning is unlike skimming because readers are not regarded with the broader meaning of the text, but the detail. Moreover, scanning aims to

excerpt specific information without reading all the text (Muddin & Rahayamtel, 2018). According to Thamrin (2012), the procedures of scanning approaches are as follows.

- a. Keep in mind only the clear information to be discovered.
- b. Make a decision, on which clues would provide for the finding of the required information. Have a rush view and brush off the page fast to catch sight of the clues if the clues are found.
- c. Read that sector to get the information needed.

2.3. Making predictions

Making predictions is an effective strategy that can be used by teachers in teaching reading a text which helps students to organize their thoughts, as they move from considering what is in the text to predicting their background knowledge (Jufri, 2018). Making predictions is a strategy in which readers use information from pictures, and titles to make predictions about the story. The title of a text can be operated by memories of texts, permitting them to guess the content of a new text. During reading, successful readers can make predictions about what will occur next, or what opinions the writer will offer to support a discussion (Banditvilai, 2020).

2.4. Questioning

Questioning helps students monitor their comprehension and stay engaged in their reading. Readers can use the questioning before, during, and after reading. The questioning process requires readers to ask questions of themselves to construct meaning, enhance understanding, find answers, solve problems, find information, and discover new information (Banditvilai, 2020). Questioning is a process that the readers apply before, during, and after reading (Indriyana & Kuswandono, 2019).

3. Steps of teaching reading skills

3.1. Warm-up

- a. The teachers held a warm-up session to motivate the students and focus their attention on the topic he or she showed a poster with different pictures. Through, looking at the pictures, students should logically think and guess the topic of the lesson (Khamraeva, 2016).
- b. The teachers asked brainstorming questions about the topic and a discussion was held (Khamraeva, 2016).

3.2. Pre-reading

The purpose of pre-reading was to assist the students in getting the most out of what they were going to read. This was done by providing the students with pre-reading questions to activate students to think and relate their relevant background to the text, to preview important points, and to set a purpose for reading (Banditvilai, 2020).

- a. Predicting based on the teacher writing the title of the text and asking students to predict what reading passage they were going to read was about (Guzel, 2022).

- b. Guessing the meaning showed the pictures of disasters and asked students to guess the meaning of these disasters (Khamraeva, 2016).
- c. The teachers asked questions to the learners to activate background knowledge of the topic. The learners tried to activate their schemata about the topic of the text. The learners tried to express their ideas about the topic of the text (Guzel, 2022).

3.3. While-reading

The while-reading phase was to help the students develop their skills of eliciting from what they read. Students needed to use bottom-up processes to analyze words, phrases, and sentences in texts to verify their anticipation from the reading phase and to understand the details of the text (Banditvilai, 2020).

- a. Scanning and skimming: The teacher asked students to read the text and highlight the main ideas of the text, then find specific pieces of information (Khamraeva, 2016).
- b. Matching: Students were asked to match text captions to pictures and to elicit the main points of each paragraph in a text (Guzel, 2022).
- c. Jigsaw: Students were asked to fit headings and subheadings into a text from which they had been removed (Guzel, 2022).
- d. True/False/Not Given: Students read the statements and decided whether statements were related to the content of the text or not (Khamraeva, 2016). Teachers ask the learners to read the text and the learners do (Guzel, 2022).

3.4. Post-reading

The purpose of follow-up was to help the students develop the information gained from what they learned. It enabled students not only to review or conclude what they have read from the text but also to integrate the textual information into their own experiences (Banditvilai, 2020).

- a. Retelling: Students were asked to retell the meaning of the text (Banditvilai, 2020).
- b. Reporting-Roleplay: The teachers asked one student to be a journalist and conduct interviews with his classmates about the environment (Banditvilai, 2020).
- c. Summarizing: Students summarized the topic and filled in the T-chart table (Khamraeva, 2016). The teachers asked the learners to work in a group and the teachers set classroom discussions to construct learners' understanding. The learners would work in groups and express their ideas about the topic of the text (Guzel, 2022).

3.5. Homework

Writing a paragraph about environmental problems is one of the techniques. During the class, reading was integrated with both speaking and writing. While doing reading activities, students were highly motivated to participate in pairwork and group work and enjoyed doing different tasks (Khamraeva, 2016)

4. Other useful techniques to improve English reading skills

4.1. Empowering students: Nurturing proficient reading skills for academic success

Reading skills is not just a passive act but rather a cognitive ability that individuals employ when interacting with written texts (Bojovic, 2010), especially as students advance in their academic pursuits, such as at the university level, proficient reading skills become increasingly crucial for acquiring knowledge and learning new information. However, many students lack adequate reading abilities to effectively engage with complex texts (Wichadee, 2005).

As noted by Syakur and Azis (2020), reading is a multifaceted process through which readers extract messages conveyed by writers through written language. This process demands that readers perceive groups of words as a cohesive unit, enabling them to derive meaning from individual words and comprehend the intended message. Failure to fulfill this requirement can impede the proper execution of the reading process, resulting in a lack of comprehension. Reading, therefore, serves as a means to access information encoded in written form, requiring the decoding of symbols that constitute language.

The act of reading encompasses various cognitive processes, including visual perception, memory retention, intellectual engagement, and comprehension (Syakur & Azis, 2020). It is an intricate activity that draws upon these cognitive faculties to decipher and interpret the meaning embedded within written texts. From these diverse definitions of reading, it is evident that reading is not merely a mechanical task but rather a complex cognitive endeavor that necessitates active engagement and understanding (Em, 2022).

To address the challenge of inadequate reading skills among students, it is of paramount importance for teachers to prioritize the development of comprehensive strategies to enhance reading proficiency. This includes implementing effective teaching methodologies, providing targeted interventions, and fostering a supportive learning environment conducive to the cultivation of strong reading habits. By equipping students with the necessary tools and skills to navigate written texts effectively, teachers can empower them to succeed academically and beyond (Em, 2023).

4.2. Navigating the path to English reading mastery: Insights and strategies

Under the general heading of reading as a cognitive process, theoretical approaches to reading that concentrate on higher-level reading processes (also known as "top-down" and "interactive"), like comprehension, and lower-level reading processes (also known as "bottom-up"), like decoding, will be included. "Bottom-up" and "top-down" are terms that are occasionally used to describe the direction of processing within theoretical models of text processing. The terms are not always used consistently in the literature, but they refer to the process of decoding sounds and letters to words to sentences (bottom-up) or text comprehension level (top-down) (Tindale, 2005).

Routines and procedures that enable people to track and evaluate their progress in completing a cognitive activity are known as metacognitive reading techniques. While reading, before, and after, readers can use a variety of metacognitive reading techniques. These three categories, learning, monitoring, and evaluating, align with this idea in metacognitive reading practices (Iwai, 2016).

The coordination of several factors, including word sounds, meanings, parts, grammar, and comprehension-supporting methods, is necessary for the complicated mental process of

reading. All of these elements need to be controlled and smoothly coordinated by proficient readers for understanding to be achieved (Cartwright, 2012).

4.3. Unlocking the power of English reading: Techniques for success

Reading strategies primarily center on three metacognitive skills, including support reading, global reading, and problem-solving. These cognitive techniques support language readers in understanding the diverse reading preferences of their readers and deciding which reading strategies to introduce in the language classroom would be the most successful (Syatriana et al., 2024). Reading at a slower pace, reviewing the text, reading the passage aloud, and making educated guesses about the meaning of challenging words are all problem-solving techniques (Em & Nun, 2022). Proficient readers frequently take part in intentional activities that call for thoughtful planning, adaptable tactics, and regular self-evaluation (Tercanlioglu, 2004).

Academic reading may be very challenging, and reading skills for success do not attempt to hide this. Alternatively, it provides strategies for handling academic reading in manageable portions, bolstered by carefully selected instances of real texts and connections to additional reading outside of the language (Coxhead, 2005).

Understanding the text's fiction is one method of critical reading. To do this, it is vital to focus on whether the text's ideas are presented in a correct flow and whether their cause-and-effect links are created correctly (Utku-Osensoy, 2021).

4.4. Mastering English texts: Proven methods for improved reading comprehension

Conventionally, readers are instructed to focus on language knowledge, vocabulary, and the structure of a passage while reading. It is important to note that generating questions is a strategy that can be done at different phases of reading (e.g., pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading) (Khaki, 2014).

In addition to the reader's attributes like past knowledge and working memory, comprehension is also influenced by linguistic processes, including vocabulary, decoding, fundamental reading abilities, sensitivity to text structure, inferencing, and motivation. Understanding also necessitates the efficient application of strategic procedures, like both metacognition and comprehension monitoring (Moore, 2015).

Effective strategies for reading comprehension to improve reading skills like activating and using background knowledge, generating and asking questions, making inferences, predicting, summarizing, visualizing, and comprehension monitoring are all crucial (Pourhosein-Gilakjani, 2016).

4.6. The roadmap to fluent reading: Essential tips and tools

Technology tools for e-reading can help all children and youth achieve better literacy results. Those in charge of developing policies and allocating funds for e-reading devices need to make sure the device adheres to the universal design for learning principles, pay close attention to the device's body of evidence, supply the infrastructure needed for it, and maximize the increased productivity and amount of information it offers (Griffiths & Biancarosa, 2012).

Kilpatrick (2015) investigated three basic reading approaches where were whole word, phonics, and whole language. Moreover, fluent reading comprehension such as vocabulary-

semantic knowledge, syntactic-grammatical knowledge, background knowledge, working memory, comprehension monitoring, and nonverbal visual-spatial skills are important (Heng et al., 2023).

4.7. Cracking the code of English texts: Effective learning techniques unveiled

Methods used by English majors are predicated on Bloom's Taxonomy, a theoretical framework that provides a hierarchical classification of cognitive domains. A framework for assessing and developing instructional strategies for critical thinking is provided by the Taxonomy's systematic classification into lower-order (knowledge, comprehension, application) and higher-order (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) cognitive capacities (Le et al., 2024).

An explanation for the veracity of an idea or truth that has been expressly stated is produced through elaborate questioning. Explaining the processes taken to solve an issue or the relationship between new information and existing knowledge are examples of self-explanation. Writing condensed versions of materials that need to be learned is known as summarization. When reading items that need to be learned, underlining or highlighting potentially significant passages is done (Houn & Em, 2022). Using mental imagery and keywords to correlate spoken things is known as keyword mnemonics (Dunlosky, 2013).

In addition, trying to visualize text while reading or listening is known as text imagery. After a first reading, rereading is the process of reviewing the text content once more. Testing oneself or reviewing content that has yet to be learned is known as practice testing. Enacting a practice program that gradually distributes study tasks is known as distributed practice. Interleaved practice refers to adhering to a study plan that incorporates a variety of topics into a single study session or a practice schedule that incorporates a variety of problem types (Em, 2023).

The reading motivation that drives one to read is a topic of interest in the realm of education (Em & Khampirat, 2024). To teach and promote learning, it is crucial to research and put into practice the circumstances that lead to students' motivation to read. Moreover, there are different types of motivation like integrative, instrumental, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivation. These kinds of motivations push effective learning reading techniques (Kheang et al., 2024).

5. Conclusion

Reading is an excellent way for students to make progress in language learning and implementing different pre-reading, while-reading (Mulatu & Regassa, 2022), and post-reading activities are not only practical to integrate the other skills but also a very beneficial and effective way of developing students' reading and understanding comprehension (Baleghizadeh & Zakervafaei, 2020). Moreover, it can be argued that the utilization of read-through methodologies such as skimming and scanning manifest as quintessential expedients that potentially facilitate the economization of chronological expenditure and augment the compendium of comprehension across variegated textual entities. The consummate acquisition of such stratagems substantively amplifies the adeptness in bibliophage activities; therefore, escalating the efficacy and efficiency at which informatory content is assimilated. Predominant scholarly expositions corroborate that the employment of tactics encompassing skimming, scanning, prognostication, and interrogation has been inextricably linked with the amplification of apprehension in scholastic readings among learners.

The mentioned essential points in the article are truly a recommendation for learners of the English language in developing countries like Cambodia. Therefore, Cambodian learners of the English language, as the title indicated, should critically take the essential points we mentioned in this article into consideration so that their English reading ability can be improved consistently. The article also informs the English language teachers in Cambodia and beyond to take the highlighted techniques to improve students' reading ability and motivation. Education-related stakeholders should also be informed by the article and help the students and teachers as well as educators as much as they can to develop the country as a whole.

Moreover, the article is only a pioneer for further studies. It is not the end. Thus, additional studies should address the effectiveness of using different techniques in teaching and learning English in Cambodia and other parts of the world. The studies may employ different techniques such as qualitative designs, quantitative designs, or even mixed-methods designs.

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