

Lesson 11 : Effective Reading

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental skill for all learners. It enables individuals to process, analyze, and evaluate information in order to build knowledge. Through reading, learners observe how language is used in real contexts. Reading is not a passive activity; rather, it is an active process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with the text and reconstructing the author's ideas.

1. Definition of Reading

Reading is the process of constructing meaning from written symbols. It is a complex cognitive activity that involves decoding written signs in order to understand a message. According to Baudoin et al. (1994), reading is a complex activity that combines word recognition—how written symbols relate to spoken language—and comprehension, which involves making sense of words, sentences, and connected texts.

To read effectively, a reader must be able to visually recognize the text, decode it, comprehend its meaning, and respond to it. As soon as the reader sees the text, the eyes and brain work together to process information. Meaning is created not only from words and sentences but also from the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, and memories activated by the text.

2. Types of Reading

2.1 Intensive Reading

Intensive reading focuses on short texts and aims at achieving specific learning objectives. It is usually done in the classroom under the guidance of a teacher. According to Harmer (2001), intensive reading is careful, focused, and less relaxed. It allows learners to analyze texts closely, understand details, and make critical judgments about content, language, and organization.

This type of reading requires slow and careful attention to grammatical, syntactic, and semantic aspects of the text. It goes beyond understanding general ideas and focuses on how the text is structured and how meaning is developed (Alyousef, 2005).

2.2 Extensive Reading

Extensive reading involves reading long texts such as novels, books, or articles for general understanding and enjoyment. It is usually done outside the classroom. Long and Richards (1971) define extensive reading as reading large amounts of interesting material while focusing on overall meaning rather than details. The main goals of extensive reading are to improve fluency, build confidence, and develop a positive attitude toward reading.

3. Reading Techniques

3.1 Skimming

Skimming is a reading technique used to get the general idea or main points of a text quickly. The reader does not focus on details but looks for key information such as titles, headings, and topic sentences. Skimming helps save time and allows readers to decide whether a text is worth reading in detail.

3.2 Scanning

Scanning is a technique used to find specific information in a text quickly. The reader looks for particular words, numbers, or facts without reading the whole text. Scanning is commonly used in everyday situations, such as looking up a word in a dictionary or finding a phone number.

Although skimming and scanning are often confused, they serve different purposes. Skimming focuses on general ideas, while scanning focuses on specific details.

4. Purposes of Reading

According to Grabe and Stoller (2019), reading serves several purposes:

- **Reading to search for simple information**, such as locating specific facts
- **Reading to skim quickly** in order to get a general idea of the text
- **Reading to learn from texts**, especially in academic and professional contexts
- **Reading to integrate information** from different sources
- **Reading to write and critique texts**, which involves analyzing and evaluating ideas
- **Reading for general comprehension**, which requires fluent and automatic processing of information

Reading is important not only for students but also for everyday life, as it helps people stay informed about social, political, and economic issues.

5. Benefits of Reading

Reading has many benefits that contribute to personal, academic, and professional development. These benefits include:

- Expanding vocabulary
- Improving memory and concentration
- Stimulating the brain and enhancing mental abilities
- Increasing general knowledge
- Reducing stress
- Developing analytical and critical thinking skills
- Improving writing skills

Exercise 1: Identify the Type of Reading

Read the situations below and identify whether the reading type is **intensive** or **extensive**. Then **justify your answer in one sentence**.

- A student analyzes a short scientific text to understand its arguments and language.
- A learner reads a novel at home for pleasure.
- A teacher asks students to study a paragraph closely in class.
- A student reads several articles to improve general language proficiency.

Exercise 2: Skimming vs. Scanning

Choose the correct technique (**skimming** or **scanning**) and explain **why**.

- Looking for the definition of “intensive reading” in a textbook.
- Reading the introduction and conclusion of an article to understand its topic.
- Finding a phone number in a long list of contacts.
- Checking whether an article discusses the benefits of reading.

Exercise 3: Purposes of Reading (Matching + Explanation)

Match each situation with the **most suitable purpose of reading**, then explain your choice.

Situations:	Purposes:
a. Studying a chapter before an exam	1. Reading to learn
b. Reading news headlines online	2. Reading to skim quickly
c. Writing a short academic essay	3. Reading to write and critique
d. Reading a magazine for enjoyment	4. Reading for general comprehension

Exercise 6: True or False (Justify)

Decide whether the statements are **True (T)** or **False (F)**. Correct the false ones.

- Extensive reading focuses mainly on grammar and details.
- Skimming helps readers understand the general idea of a text.
- Scanning is useful when searching for specific information.
- Reading skills are only important for students.