

Using Strategies During Reading Aloud and Silent Reading in ESL Classroom

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The basic purpose of reading is to pronounce written texts. Reading practices are usually implemented to identify words and to find their meaning. It is another way to communicate with others and sharing the information.

According to Simon Greenall and Michael Swan, strategies in reading are mainly implemented to improve accuracy and efficiency of a learner while learning a second language. These are the instruments to make the learners active in developing communicative ability. With the strategies, comprehension of a text becomes clear to the learners, who can easily realize the subject matter and thus serve the purpose of reading. Strategies are taught through direct explanation, teacher modeling and feedback. Joy Janzen said that, reading strategies in classes are implemented through shuffling over new texts and tasks, where the students meet individual strategies and groups of strategies time and time again.

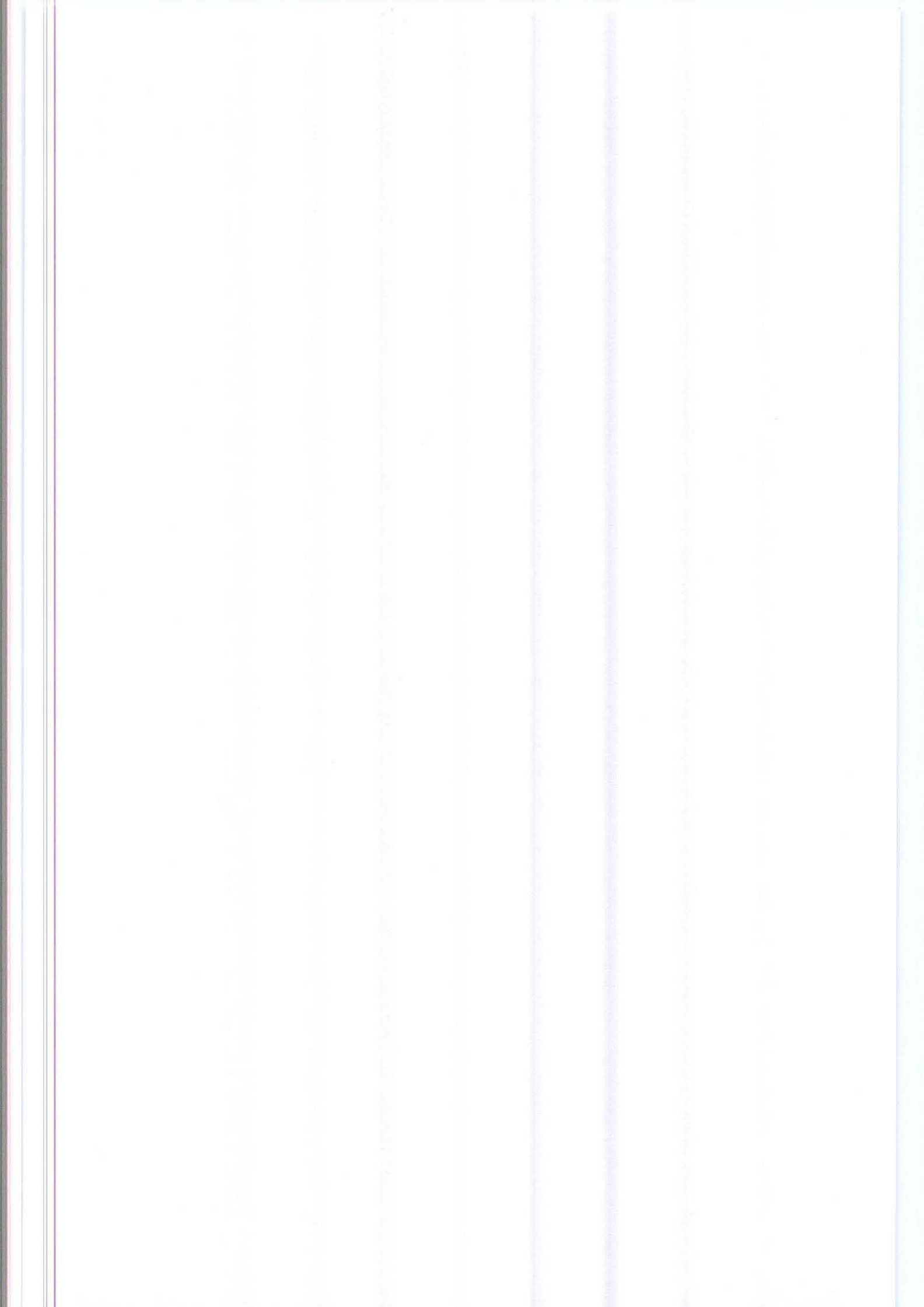
Teachers apply different reading strategies in classes to help the learners develop comprehension skills. We can name the strategies that are widely accepted and practiced as skimming, scanning, predicting, inferring, clarifying, evaluating etc. According to Simon Greenall and Michael Swan, These strategies are mainly implemented for teaching intermediate-level learners.

These involve a wide range of purpose to be served while reading texts. Teachers enforce these mainly to help learners find what the text says, which will help learners to response to further questions regarding it.

There are two other important reading strategies, one of which 'silent reading' has become less popular compared to that of 'reading aloud'. Experts have differed opinions too. Most teachers prefer 'reading aloud', which is treated as an effective method of teaching a second language these days.

The topic of my report is to portray a wide range of aspects of the 'reading aloud' strategy. I implemented the strategy in my classes, where I also observed the learners' positive feedback. My report will also include detail into the matter.

The main reason behind my choosing the strategy is that the 'reading aloud' has a wider acceptance. Experts say, as the learners know a very little of the target language in the beginning, they should be given reading aloud practices. The beginners generally lack proper pronunciation of many words and thus find understanding the whole passage tough. Practicing aloud reading helps learners increase comprehension skills and beside helps teachers to easily evaluate the learners' comprehension skills. Here, the learners can also realize their deficiency in learning the text properly. Reading aloud keeps the learners involved in the class, which subsequently increase their self-confidence.



However, there are oppositions to reading aloud, saying that it interrupts learners' reading speed and comprehension. Some learners feel discomfort or nervousness while practicing this method.

But, despite this, the strategy gave fruitful results in my class while undergoing my internship. Inside the report, I have given the details of the implementation methods of the strategy and the feedbacks.

School profile

European Standard School

European Standard School (ESS) has been one of the best English medium schools in the city. In its five branch campuses, ESS has some two thousand students from both junior and senior sections. The classes range from play-group to 'A' levels. The co-education school follows the curriculum of Cambridge, London.

The teachers here are very student-friendly and liberal about the teaching techniques implemented by the teachers for the betterment of the students. They are well experienced and talented in handling the students. The school also provides congenial environment for the students so that the learning process gets easier. However, overall performance of the students is satisfactory. ESS arranges monthly guardians' meeting, where they are informed about the students' progress and asked for explanation. Such meetings also allow the guardians to express their views and complaints, if any.

The school is properly equipped with all necessary classroom and laboratory facilities. Besides, there are open spaces and recreation rooms for the students, where they can spend the leisure time by having fun. Weekly cultural practice sessions take place regularly. Many students participate in the occasional presentations besides the games as well.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Strategies:

Strategies are special techniques used to make something easier to adopt. With this view in mind, teachers implement different strategies in their classes to teach the learners something in a simple and trouble-free way that helps learners to understand the lesson quickly. According to Simon Greenall and Michael Swan, strategies in reading are mainly implemented to improve accuracy and efficiency of a learner while learning a second language. With the help, comprehension of a text becomes clear to the learners, who can easily identify the subject matter and serve the purpose of reading (Carrell, Pharis and Liberto). "Reading strategies in classes are constantly recycled over new texts and tasks, where the students encounter individual strategies and groups of strategies time and time again" (Janzen 288).

Teachers introduce strategies in classrooms and give directions on how to practice those to the students with a view to make their learning of the target language easier. Following this, learners give feedback in terms of their performance and the teachers can realize their ability and make further changes to the strategies. This process ends when the teacher finds the appropriate strategy that suits the learners.

2.2 Some popular strategies for reading:

With the course of time, in teaching a target language, teachers and experts have been discovering many different strategies. Here, some were found effective, some were not. Beside this, some strategies were identified to be the most effective for some specific target group of learners and also for specific type of tasks. Among those, some of the well-known strategies that the teachers bring in are skimming, scanning, evaluating, predicting, guessing from the context etc. These strategies are implemented according to the learners' level of proficiency. Teachers apply these strategies with one or more purpose to be served, including that the learners can get into the passage, identify the mood of the writing and answer queries regarding the text.

Reading is essential for many reasons to be served, mainly to develop the comprehension skills of the students. It also helps to implement different strategies in teaching. When the students initiate to read, they start with the reading strategy 'predicting', they predict the text by its title. Then they read the text to get the general idea which is called 'skimming'. Then comes 'scanning', by this strategy they search for specific information in it. While the students scan the text they find unfamiliar words. Then they come to know how to deal with unknown word, which refers to the strategy 'dealing with unfamiliar words'.

Sometimes learners need to know the main idea of a written text. The strategy of 'skimming' is such an effective method, which students can use to get the gist of a text. It helps learners to identify the important and the less important information in a given text.

Learners usually exercise this method by reading the text quickly without paying attention to the details of the text. The strategy instructs not to find the meaning of every single word, rather to identify the general sense of the text. Practicing the strategy helps learners have a clear comprehension of the text that can help in summarizing.

Scanning is an effective strategy for the students to find out specific details of a text after a quick reading. As suggested by the researchers, it is not necessary to read the whole of a given text thoroughly, rather one can quickly find out the specific information depending on what he/she needs to know. This strategy helps the learners save much time while reading the text since they attend to the required information only instead of reading every word of the text.

Evaluation of a text is often very important for a learner while reading a text. It helps learners find the purpose of writing the given passage from the writer's point of view and how the writer expressed his/her thoughts through the passage. By practicing this strategy, a learner can also realize the different use of words and sentence structures, which can help them to make their own opinion.

Predicting is a strategy where students guess what the reading material is about. When students use this strategy they actually use their schema to guess what is the material is about. And according to Simon Greenall and Michael Swan, this strategy makes easier for the students to use their previous knowledge and also the new information they need to know. This strategy helps the students rather than having too

much load. "Developing this technique ensures that as you read, you are not overloaded with too much new information." (Greenall, Swan 3)

'Dealing with unfamiliar words' is a common strategy used to easily understand the unknown words in a text. In this application, students are directed to identify those words and to carefully read what the other words in the sentence say. Likewise, after reading the whole text, students will be able to know the meaning of whole thing. Practicing this strategy helps students' understanding over the context and their guessing skill as well.

2.3 Some popular reading practices:

If we look at how reading is taught and practiced in classes, we can observe two ways. 'Silent reading' is one of the most popular practices for teaching reading learners. It is widely practiced because it helps strengthening comprehension skill of the learners, who can get scopes to get into the given text independently and analyze it easily for further move. It gives much time to the learners to go through and to evaluate the inner meaning and the purpose of the given text. While reading silent, learners can stay involved with the text, which in the other strategies, is not possible that much. But, as silent reading does not involve more than one person, it helps improve individual skills, not for the whole of a classroom.

Another widely accepted and effective practice for teaching reading is 'reading aloud', which is also called oral reading. It is helpful for the beginner-level learners, who

know a very little about the target language. It helps mainly the teachers to evaluate the students' comprehension skills, where the students can also identify their lacking in understanding the text properly. They also come to know about the unknown words and sentence structures. During the practice, learners stay involved with the classes actively, which makes a group to perform together. The practice helps improve pronunciation skill of the students which is an important issue while learning a foreign language. As the practice involves both the teachers and the learners together, and the mistakes are corrected, a long-term improvement is seen among the learners. Thus the learners become more confident about reading in result.

However, some people speak against 'reading aloud', as they say the requirement to focus on every single word interrupts learners' reading speed and comprehension skills. According to Sally Gibson, some learners feel discomfort or nervousness and it is also anxiety-provoking while practicing this method, which makes the learning of the target language tougher rather than easier.

Expert, like Sally Gibson said that to avoid the objections against it and to use 'reading aloud' successfully, it needs to be used by reducing the number of audience and length of the text, and according to the overall class atmosphere. She also added that teachers should set clear the objectives to the learners to get the best results out of it.

Chapter 3

My Experience

I completed my internship as a teacher in European Standard School. It was great experience for me as well as important for me. Because of this opportunity I got a chance to observe different levels of their students, how to approach them, how to implement different reading strategies on them. At the beginning of my internship period I observed few classes, which were taken by some experienced teachers. After that, I took classes of standard 5 and 6. Though this is an English medium school and some of the students performed really well, some students' reading skills were really poor, which I did not expect. So I think the teachers in this situation should identify the problems of the students and work on the problems of them otherwise their skill would not be developed. And to serve this purpose, the teachers should teach the learners the strategies to be applied while reading.

3.1 My role as a teacher:

I found the students weak in reading in the second language and they were also poor in vocabulary skill. Then I introduced reading aloud strategy in my classes. But after a few days I found that they were not improving well. I then implemented the 'silent reading' strategy among them, which they liked. The students were seen very active in reading the given texts, as they had scopes to spend more time with reading and identifying unknown words to realize the general sense of the text. But silent reading was not fruitful for all. Only a few students could utilize the opportunity of silent reading in

the classes, where most of them failed. Also, it became tough for me to realize and evaluate the students' improvement while they were practicing in a silent way, it was tough to ask everyone, and check that whether they have understood the text or not. In such a situation I also implemented different strategies like skimming, scanning, evaluating, predicting and guessing from the context to practice and improve their reading skill. These strategies also had impacts over the students, but teacher-student communication was not satisfactory in practicing these. So I decided to continue the reading aloud and the silent strategy in parallel with a view to ensure better learning of the target language.

3.2 Situation of the class:

As an English medium school, all the subjects but Bangla were taught in English in all the classes. I used to take classes of different sections of standard five and six. The size of the classes were medium and so that most of the time it was easy to handle students. The students were a little weak in English as it is their second language. I observed that the students could read, but took much time to understand the meaning of the sentences.

3.3 Analyzing my reading lessons:

While starting a new chapter, I used to start the class by reading aloud the first few paragraphs of the text first. Then I asked my students to tell me the points that they

could not understand. After making necessary solutions to their queries, I asked one of them to start reading aloud so that everyone could hear. After analyzing their reading skill, I used to tell the students to read silently and individually. Later, they were asked to go through some exercises to evaluate their 'skimming', 'scanning', 'evaluating', 'predicting' and 'guessing from the context' strategies. With these exercises, reading of text was completed, because of which vocabulary, sentence structures and the overall comprehension of the given text became easy.

3.4 My experience with the strategies:

While introducing a new text in the class, and then I used to give them an overview of it, so that they could understand the text easily. Then I asked few students one after another to read the text aloud. After that I asked the students who were reading aloud, some skimming type of question to check their comprehension. The students gave mixed responses about the strategy. Because the students who were introvert, rather than giving answer orally, they preferred to write. But most of the students liked the skimming strategy, as they get the general idea on the text in class and did not have to spend extra time and give extra effort for reading every word.

Then I introduced scanning strategy to the class. Again I asked the students to read aloud the text one by one. And like before, I asked scanning type questions to the students who were reading aloud. But again they could not answer and also not all the other students who were listening to them, but a very few could answer. About this

strategy when my supervisor asked the students, the said that this strategy does not give any chance to be inattentive or unmindful in the class.

After this, I applied the strategy 'guessing from the context'. Here the students had to predict from the text and thus dealt with the unfamiliar words. As it is not possible for the students to check the meaning of each word from the dictionary, they have to guess from the context. While I was applying this strategy, all the students started to participate one at a time and this made the class chaotic and also not everyone was giving appropriate answer. So I decided to pick one and if he/she gives correct answer then I wrote that on the board. And in this way I continued to use this strategy.

I also implemented the evaluation strategy in my classes. Before applying the strategy I asked them to carefully read the text silently to identify the purpose of the writer while preparing the text. The students were given specific time-frame to complete reading the text themselves silently and focus on evaluation. And the students admitted that this strategy helped them to understand the text quickly. I applied this strategy only on the students of standard six. Because when I tried to apply this strategy on the students of standard five I found that they could not perform well, as they were too young to use this.

All these strategies were applied on the students using two popular practices reading aloud and silent reading. And I found that these strategies were more successful when these were applied during silent reading practices.

3.5 Experience with reading aloud and silent reading:

Initially, my primary target was to make the students practice 'reading aloud', as it is well accepted as a tool for teaching the beginning-level students. I introduced the 'reading aloud' practice in my classes, as it was my main focus that whether this practice is actually effective or not. My supervisor in the school and colleagues also suggested me to apply this practice. Most of my colleagues were used to implement it and told me that it was effective, saying that it helps students to get the gist and also it helped the teacher control the class. Moreover, according to them, 'reading aloud' helps learners to understand a text and improve vocabulary skills and this was also said by the researchers. And it is also teacher-friendly, as I stated before that it helps the teachers to control the class and to bring the whole class all together as everyone listens and follow one reader.

But when I asked one of my students to 'read aloud' in a class and instructed others to identify the unknown words, I found that the students could not comprehend, also failed to get the gist of the text, was unable to deal with the unfamiliar words and could not guess from the context. Besides, the other students also failed to comprehend and identify words, as the student who was reading aloud was more concern about pronunciation, and so their brain had a very little space for comprehension. They could not understand many things and thus could not find the general sense of the given text. When I asked them scanning type questions, they could not provide specific answers too. Only a very few number of students were found who were competent. Then I realized that the practice did not work for the whole class.

While the students were practicing 'reading aloud', I had a scope to stop the reader for a while and describe the meaning of the sentences and complex words that have already been read. It helped them a lot in making the text understand. After describing, I used to ask them questions, to correct and simplify the text orally, whether they failed or succeeded to answer a question or not. I also observed that some of the students were getting confident, while some were feeling shy to read aloud. This is especially why I decided to make shifting in my teaching practice.

Moreover, students doing this practice get very little time to comprehend the text while reading or listening to others, whereas 'silent reading' gives students much time to go through the text, identify the key points and thus understand the text easily. For this reason too, I decided to implement the other strategies and practices. In this context, I observed that as my students were of the primary-level classes, they could not cope with the combination of listening and understanding or reading and understanding the text at the same time. Meanwhile, 'silent reading' gave them the scope to make the learning in their way independently.

In the first few classes, 'silent reading' practices did not benefit the students much according to my expectations as they were new to the practice. But after regular practices beside implementation of reading aloud and some other strategies, improvement in the students' performance was visible. Soon they became competent and took less time to comprehend the texts and thus could answer to the related questions.

3.6 Comparison between reading aloud and silent reading:

Both the two popular practices have merits and demerits upon the learners. During reading aloud practices teachers can easily evaluate the students' skills when they read, which is not possible in silent reading until they are asked for feedback. In reading aloud, students cannot easily comprehend the text as they stress on pronunciation and reading only. But in silent practice, students can focus on understanding the text as well as to identify the unfamiliar words and sentence structures.

Students are allowed to practice silent reading independently and fearlessly, but while implementing reading aloud, they have to speak in a way so that the other students in the class including the teacher can hear. For this reason, many students feel shy while reading aloud, though it is said that continuous practice removes this nervousness. On the other hand, most students feel easy while reading silent.

3.7 Recommendations:

My observation suggests that both the reading aloud and the silent reading should be implemented to the beginner-level students with a special stress on reading aloud because teacher-student interaction is very low in silent reading. Students should be directed to practice silent reading after reading aloud so that they get more time and scope to use different strategies. Thus, they will have a chance to find the gist of the context and also identify the complicated words and sentence structures.

But, as it is tough to identify the students' progress while practicing silent reading, it is not effective to implement the practice in a class of beginning level students who are studying English as a foreign language.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

During my internship as a teacher, I observed that the teacher has to be skillful to teach language effectively. Here implementation of different strategies can play a vital role. A teacher should identify student-friendly and suitable strategies that will be very effective, and introduce those in class. Once the strategies have been introduced, the teacher should then closely observe the students' activities to make sure that the students are successfully using the strategies for improving their language. And these strategies work best when applied during silent reading.

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