

**MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC –  
METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL****MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC –  
METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL**<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**THE EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHODS OF READING SKILL  
THROUGH SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH***Dinora J. Oblaqulova**Student**Uzbekistan State World Languages University**Tashkent, Uzbekistan**E-mail: [dinaraoblakulova49@gmail.com](mailto:dinaraoblakulova49@gmail.com)***ABOUT ARTICLE**

**Key words:** reading skill, reading comprehension, short stories, reading speed, vocabulary resource, translation, teaching methods, reading activities, main idea.

**Received:** 15.02.24

**Accepted:** 17.02.24

**Published:** 19.02.24

**Abstract:** This article deals with the practical teaching methods of reading through short stories in English classes. It mainly focuses on the importance of reading skills in the class and highlights its important role in the language. Moreover, it analyzes the main difficulties that students encounter with when reading short stories and they are illustrated with valid examples and reasons in the discussion part. Also, the effective teaching methods are suggested as the solutions to address the problems associated with reading skill and valid statements come as a supporting part. In order to highlight all of these features in the article, reliable sources, practical methods are widely employed, particularly, O. Henry's "Witches' loaves" is used as an example to explain the importance of suggested teaching methods in the English class.

**INTRODUCTION**

The role of the reading skill in language acquisition is remarkably significant, as it poses many crucial benefits on an academic success. For this reason, the effective teaching methods of reading through short stories during the English classes are becoming more controversial among teachers and researchers who carry out scientific research in this field. In general, reading is a skill which is highly dependent on the level of vocabulary and thinking abilities. This skill stands out as the most necessary one in language learning process due to its possible benefits, since it not only has a positive effect on writing and grammar, but also has a profound effect on ESL students' outlook and horizons. It is true that, even international testing systems like IELTS, TOEFL and TOEIC has a section which evaluates

the test takers' reading skill by providing text and questions related to it. Having said that, language learners are encountering with difficulties in acquiring reading skill. To be more specific, limited vocabulary resource, poor comprehension and problems related to the translation of the text into their own language are making the process challenging. In order to rectify these problematic situations, effective teaching methods and strategies ought to be applied in the English classroom. The initial teaching process with reading may start with teaching students how to read and analyze short stories in this language, as stories are easier to comprehend and easy to follow in comparison with novels or books with difficult language. Additionally, the improvement of the reading through short stories can be entertaining process primarily because of the sequential events in the stories that make the learning environment more relaxing, interesting and informative. Short stories are by far the most powerful tool in learning languages, since following the storyline is easier, learning new words related to one topic is more effective and developing thinking skills by predicting and making guesses is also possible. Therefore, this article mainly focuses on improving the reading skill through short stories and suggests effective methods of teaching related to this skill. O. Henry's short story named Witches' Loaves comes as an example for analyzing and demonstrating the importance of the story in boosting reading ability.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study of the teaching ways in reading skill through short stories can be approached using a wide range of methods, such as comparing-contrasting, analyzing surveys as well as experiments and making conclusions with observations. Initially, comparing-contrasting method is applied by making valid comparisons between facts and statements which helps to identify main issues in acquisition of reading skill and to suggest clear solutions to address them. Also, analysis of surveys and experiments is employed to collect information on the importance of reading and their core benefits in language learning. They may be helpful for grouping all data in a logical way and making them accurate as well as clear. Moreover, conducting observations plays a vital role in getting a deeper understanding of how reading skill can be enhanced through short stories and its application in the language use. It is certainly true that all these methods should be combined in order to learn about the features of reading skill, its difficulties and its improvement by the use of short stories in learning English.

As a material source, a wide range of books, articles and short stories are employed in this article. "The reading comprehension blueprint" by Nancy Lewis Hennessy is used for emphasizing the importance of the reading comprehension and making recommendations for boosting this skill with use of various strategies. "Teaching reading comprehension to students with learning difficulties" by Karen R., Harris and Steve Graham was also taken as a source to make investigations about overall reading comprehension, vocabulary resource improvement and practical ways for promoting this skill. Furthermore, "SRA Open Court Reading" by Marsha L. was employed to

analyze the main issues related to this skill and exploring new effective ways to enhance it. Ryan James's book "Speed Reading" was also helpful to discover information about understanding its importance and implementing effective strategies for improvement. Another book is "Reading for Understanding" by Jossey-Bass that is practical for collecting data about independent reading, viable approaches and their use. It is also worth mentioning that O. Henry's "Complete writings" is also of importance. It consisted of twenty five stories and his "Witches Loaves" is used in the article to illustrate teaching methods role. It can be stated that there are other informative and reliable source that are used to gather information for this article.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

It is important to note that language learners face with various challenges related to their reading skill. In the process of analyzing some surveys and experiments, many important difficulties with reading short stories are identified. According the results of observations by Durkin (1978-1979) [1], reading comprehension was found as the skill that most students spent excessive amount of time for catching a main meaning. Reading comprehension is associated with understanding the main meaning of the words from the text and it is not only about words or sentences, but it is mainly about thoughts and ideas. Poor reading comprehension may be contributed by difficulties with recognition of new words in the text, difficult grammar structures and having troubles with making a full meaning from the sentence [2]. Importantly, main idea by the author should be related to reader's previous knowledge which results to a comprehension as well as conclusion.

Another significant major difficulty associated with reading stories is speed reading. By its definition, it is about reading a text in a limited time and catching a main idea. Both speed and comprehension should be maintained in order to achieve efficiency. According to Ryan James's views [4], only thing that is crucial in the skill is focusing more on what you are reading in collaboration with making your eye move faster. It is excessively important for time management skills. However, speed reading became a concern for some language learners that they cannot do it successfully in some cases due to the fact that speed and comprehension should be maintained equally.

Final concern is highly dependent on the translation of short stories into the student's native languages. Major studies in this field have shown that the enhancement of the reading skills is associated with the improvement of the translation ability. According to a study that aimed to investigate the connection between translation practices and language learning, Olivia (2018) indicated that most language learners preferred activities that focus on translation [12]. Therefore, results were about the advantages which can be gained by engaging in translation, namely better vocabulary, correct grammar and overall language improvement. Having said this, it was found that difficulties with translation when reading stories are common among ESL students.

It is important to note that many effective teaching methods exist which can be employed to strengthen reading skills and addressing issues related to this skill. All of them are illustrated with the example of “Witches’ Loaves” by O. Henry [8]. Because his stories stand for with their twist ending and being full of surprises. The first primary one is related to the improvement of the reading comprehension through short stories by the use of reading activities. These activities can be implemented in three steps: pre reading, while reading and post reading [11].

Pre reading stage is associated with existing knowledge and experience of a reader. A short story’s name should be introduced by the teacher to the class where it is discussed and proper predictions are made by students about the topic based on their background knowledge. O. Henry’s “Witches’ Loaves” is taken as an example. If this story’s headline is discussed in the class before reading this story, students may predict its main events or plot by the expressed meanings of words from the headline. “Witch” – this word is used to describe a person who may have magic powers, in a negative meaning, often indicates a woman with a broomstick. “Loaves” – it is in the plural form, expresses a bread which is sliced or baked in shape of one piece. By combining these two meanings, the title suggests the close connection between one woman and her evil deeds. However, if it is analyzed deeply, one can understand that this title might be used to express sarcasm in the story. Therefore, it can be said that pre reading makes the story attractive and interesting to read, as students can start reading with high enthusiasm with their predictions [10].

In while reading process, it can be considered as a main part, since it involved reading a story fully, analyzing its grammar structures, translating new words or collocations and understanding their meaning. Also, it is aimed at grasping the main idea of the story. The sequence must be explained by a teacher to engage the students as well as while reading, teacher should stop to make students to think about and to predict the occurrence of the next events. In the example of “Witches’ Loaves”, the sequence is illustrated. Focusing on its main plot, this story is about an unmarried woman, Martha Meacham, who has a bakery. One day she has taken a fancy to his regular customer, Blumberger, who was supposed as an artist man. Every time he comes, he buys two loaves of stale bread. Seeing this man weak and very thin, Miss Martha puts a butter generously between two slices to make him happy and express her kindness. However, it contributes to unexpected events to happen. In this part of the story, students ought to be urged to guess the continuation of it by using their logic. The story leaves a lasting impression on students, since those two slices of loaves with butter was a disaster for that man. The reason why is that he was using crumbs of the bread to rub out the lines of pencil on his architectural drawing, but Martha’s kindness ruined all of his efforts. This main meaning of the story ought to be understood in while reading stage by translating new words and analyzing grammar structures.

In post reading stage, it is time for checking the comprehension and analyzing the meaning in a detailed way. Students should be encouraged to compare and contrast the characters of the story, their roles and intentions. For instance, Martha and Blumberger can be compared in terms of their life conditions and feelings. On the one hand, a sympathy ought to be expressed to Miss Martha, since she wants to find a person to love, marry and tries to be kind to that stranger man. On the other hand, Blumberger cannot be also accused, because he was working on big plans when woman's kindness destroyed all of them. It is important to note that retelling activity can be involved in this stage which stimulates students to think and express their personal attitudes on each event. With the help of these three steps, students learn to read for grasping the meaning and comprehending. Thus, it is clear that enhancement of reading comprehension can be prioritized by these three stages and additional techniques which are mentioned in collaboration with them.

When it comes to teaching methods for speed reading in short stories, it can be considered as a crucial skill to acquire. Joan A. O' Brien (1921) illustrated reading efficiency in collaboration with speed reading [5]. He proved his theory by the program with 3-8 grades. Fifty eight percent improvement was the case in their speed of reading. Therefore, it is evident that this skill also plays a vital role. For the effective teaching methods, skimming and scanning accurately as well as intelligently are the main contributors to make students to read faster. Skimming ought to be employed when the main idea is necessary and it can be done by skim through the words or sentences which do not carry proper meanings. Scanning is also another significant rapid eye movement which is associated with scanning only main points, specific information such as names or years before reading a story. It helps to familiarize with main points of the story beforehand. These two techniques can be explained by the teacher and employed to enhance the rate of reading. To illustrate this, before reading "Witches' Loaves", students may skim through the story to get its main ideas, then scan the names of characters in order to be familiar with them.

Another crucial aspect of improving reading skill by stories is related to translation. The first practice of translation process in classrooms targeted at language relied remarkably on the translation of texts into and from the native language to boost the lexical resource and knowledge for grammar features (Richards, Richards, Rodgers & Coaut, 2001). It proved beneficial, but it also made the process more difficult. Therefore, although it brings about many advantages to the language enhancement, even these days ESL students are encountering with difficulties in translating English stories into their first languages. It is believed that there are effective teaching methods to alleviate the situation. The main technique is related to learning topical new words from stories and applying them in other sentences, even in the conversations. Because the vocabulary stands as the most significant aspect for translation in reading. As the instance of "Witches' Loaves", language learners can experience some new words which are arranged on the same topic or notion, such as "bakery,

customer, loaves, stale bread, loaf, jam, tea, tasty meal, bread counter, butter and etc.” All these given words are arranged around the word “bread”. It makes easier to follow the logic and learn new words by making connections between them.

### CONCLUSION

According to all the definitions, information, explanations provided above, the importance of the reading skill, its role in language, main difficulties related to it and effective teaching methods through short stories can be deduced. The reading skill makes the mind active and improves the creative abilities of language learners, especially reading short stories helps to increase the imagination and enlarges the horizon. It is evident that reading not only involves understanding the meaning, but also it involves the proper comprehension of hidden meanings combined with additional expression, speed of reading, being informed about words that are used in texts and translating them in a correct way. Although students face challenges with these features in an English classroom, they can be addressed properly by the application of several useful teaching methods and techniques through short stories, since stories are easy to follow and the best tools for enhancing the comprehension. O. Henry’s “Witches’ Loaves” was used as a prime example to illustrate each of these methods. These might involve three stages of reading activities: Pre, while and post reading in combination with predicting, understanding a sequence, comparing the characters, distinguishing the facts from opinions and the strategy of retelling it by adding personal opinions. All of these practical and effective teaching methods have their own important roles to boost reading skill through short stories in English.

### REFERENCES:

- [1]. Janette K.K., Sharon V., Alison B. “Teaching Reading Comprehension to students with learning difficulties”. T., The Guilford Press, 2015.
- [2]. Cesare C., Jane O. “Reading Comprehension Difficulties”. T., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996.
- [3]. Nancy L.H. “The Reading Comprehension Blueprint”. T., Brookes Publishing Company, 2020.
- [4]. Ryan James. “Speed Reading”. T., The committee of Publishers Association, 2017.
- [5]. Pramila A., G.C. Ahuja. “How to increase your Speed Reading”. T., Sterling Publishers, 2007.
- [6]. Bonnie B.A., Fran L., Jean O. “Put Reading First”. T., Diane Publishing, 2010.
- [7]. Ruth S., Cynthia G., Christine C. “Reading for Understanding”. T., WestED, 2012.
- [8]. O. Henry. “Complete Writings of O. Henry”. T., Doubleday, Page & Company, 1911
- [9]. Bensoussan M. “Schema Effects in EFL Reading Comprehension”. T., Journal of Research in Reading, 21, 213-227, 1998.

[10]. Marsha L. “Effective teaching strategies for improving reading comprehension in K-3 students”. T., SRA Open Court Reading, Mc Graw Hill Education, 2016.

[11]. Serda Güzel. “The importance of reading activities in reading comprehension”. T., Disiplinlerarası Yen Araş Der, 2(1), 29-34, 2022.

[12]. Amal Alaboud. “The positive effect of translation on improving reading comprehension among female Arabic learners of English as foreign language”. T., Arab World English Journal, ISSN: 2229-9327, Vol 13, Number 2, June 2022.

[13]. Sakurai, N. The influence of translation on reading amount, proficiency, and speed in extensive reading. Reading in a Foreign Language, 2015

[14]. Block EL. “How They Read: Comprehension Monitoring of L1 and L2 Readers”. T., TESOL Quarterly, 26(2), 1992.

[15]. Nuttall C. “Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language”. Oxford, Macmillan, 1996.