TEACHING READING IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Lidia Urubkova
Ryazan State Medical University, Russia

ABSTRACT

This article shows that reading aloud is an important step in the development of mature silent reading. The analysis of psycho-physiological mechanisms of the two forms of reading proves it. The Expressiveness Quotient of reading illustrates that there should be achieved a certain level of oral reading before it can be transferred to silent reading. The development of students' awareness of the means and forms of formulating thought in reading is of great importance in teaching reading. Success in reading much depends on the strategies and ways of realizing how the process of reading is being carried out.

The aim of this article is to describe the process of reading as a language art and to show how to help students read more effectively.

Reading as a skill exists in two forms: reading aloud and silent reading. The analysis of psycho-physiological processes involved in reading shows that articulation is present not only in oral reading but in silent reading as well. Weak, invisible activity of the speech organs in silent reading at the primary stage of learning is a necessary mechanism of thinking which helps to carry out all logical operations. The activity of speech organs results in integration of all sense perceptions and in the primary control which makes all other sensations real and exact.

Though the neuro-physiological aspect of the integration process of nerve impulses is not clear yet, many specialists point at an important part played by the activity of speech organs at the beginning of foreign language acquisition (Zhinkin, 1958; Faaborg-Anderson, 1958). It means that teaching reading must be based on speech analysers and that reading aloud must be the first step of teaching reading in a foreign language (Hawkins, 1991). The study of oral reading and silent reading in reference to inner speech shows that the peculiarities of inner speech depend on the art of language in which it is formed (Sokolov, 1978). We can suppose that mechanisms and phases of inner speech in silent reading, the character of its restructuring is determined by how outer speech in oral reading is being formed and by how it has been formed. On the other hand, the outer

speech in reading aloud shows the peculiarities of inner speech in silent reading. This is because the sound speech in oral reading is, in fact, the exterior form of inner speech. The stage of oral reading makes the teaching process more human and allows students' experiences of study, work and life to develop.

The idea of the gradual transfer from loud reading in the form of outer speech to silent reading in the form of inner speech corresponds to modern understanding of any human activity as having its structural and many-levelled character and to the conception of interiorization of intellectual actions and notions. The important thing is that inner and outer activity is characterized by the unity of structure. Inner activity constantly includes some separate outer actions and operations. Mature outer activity includes inner operations, actions of thought (Leonjtev, 1972).

In this dialectical unity, reading aloud plays the part of the first stage in the development of reading as a language art. Oral reading influences the formation of inner speech in silent reading and the development of reading as a language art.

Reading as a form of communication does not exist without intonation. "Real human speech is impossible without intonation. All language depends on intonation, if language is understood as an immediate reality of thought" (Losev, 1982). The phenomenon of inner intonation is silent reading helps to understand what is emphasized in the text and what is reduced (Zhinkin, 1958).

Out of the three levels on intonation typical of the highest range of expressiveness - phonological, lexico-grammatical and emphatic - we take the first two in accordance with the principle of approximation (Zhinkin, 1978). But there are also limitations to the first two levels. On the first level, students must acquire the system of phoneme opposites. On the second level, they must acquire phrase and logical stress, the melody of the main types of sentences, pauses dividing meaningful groups. Students beginning to learn a foreign language are usually not taught the skill of expressive oral reading. Their speed of reading is three times slower than the norm (the norm is 120 words in English, 104 words a minute in Russian) and the Expressiveness Quotient is far from the norm. The normal Expressiveness Quotient must be 0, 3± 0, 01 both in English and in Russian.

i - intermediate pauses; they divide the text into meaningful groups.
1 - linking pauses; they connect words within meaningful groups.
f - final pauses; they mark the end of sentences.

The fact that the Expressiveness Quotient is the same in English and in Russian means that reading as a process does not depend on in which language it takes place. The types

of mistakes in oral reading made by students show that the development of this skill is taking place unconsciously and students are unaware of the intonation norms of speech. Students stress every word, make pauses after each word, distort pronunciation of words and do not connect words into meaningful groups.

One of the main aims of learning to read in a foreign language is to teach students to acquire the skill of marking intonation in the printed text. Marking intonation in the text is based on concrete images which help students to acquire the language. Students can be given texts with intonation marks and read these texts. They can exchange texts which they have marked at home and then correct them in class. They can read each other's texts using the marks of intonation made at home. The next kind of work, marking texts while listening to the speaker's perfect reading, model reading, will form the skill of hearing intonation. Thus students are taught to perceive the intonation structure of a sentence and to compare it to the intonation standard of the language.

While analyzing reading in a foreign language it is also necessary to take into account the psychological peculiarities of the prediction mechanism, of memory and of metacognitive or reflective processes of thinking.

The mechanism of prediction lies at the basis of perception and understanding in reading. It proves that a reader perceives the text in a very active way. He does it with the help of certain means and the rules of such a scheme of predictions are correlated with the rules of producing speech. These suggestions explain a well-known fact of predictions of the form, to say nothing of the content. We can say that predictions of the form are based on two-system relations between words - syntagmatic and paradigmatic. And a great part is also played by the language experience of the reader. Thus a reader constantly gives himself a program, of the nearest action and the form in which information comes.

If the mechanism of predictions is developed in oral reading it will help to develop the ability of making predictions in silent reading. Skills of dividing the text into meaningful groups and uniting them with the help of intonation create conditions for the development of the mechanism of predictions. The essence of the mechanism of predictions in silent and oral reading is the same. The skill of prediction in oral reading will be part of the positive experience of prediction in silent reading.

The activity of the memory is also of great importance in the process of teaching reading. The main principle of the mechanism of memory is a constant change of information between sense analysers (nerve fibers that send and receive signals) and short-term memory on the one hand and long-term memory on the other (Kamenskaya, 1990). It must be kept in mind that short-term memory and long-term memory do not necessarily

have different neurological structures. It is quite possible that the functions of short-term memory and long-term memory are determined by different phases of the activity of one and the same structure (Atkinson, 1988). But the main thing is that it is the short-term operative memory which gives a direction to streams of information. Thus information coming to memory constantly acquires a new organization and integration with the information already deposited in the memory (Kamenskaya, 1990). The transfer of information to long-term memory is taking place within the limits of the operative memory. The operative memory functions only in the process of doing some activity. And both forms of memory, short-term memory and long-term memory, begin to interact in the process of solving some cognitive tasks. Thus if we understand long –term memory as a depository of the past experience and the extraction from that depository takes place in the process of some activity and depends on the content and direction of that activity, and if we understand short-term memory in the same way, then we can suggest that if the actions with the language material in short-term operative memory were active and if those action were part of cognitive tasks, then we can suppose that the language material will go to long-term memory very soon without many repetitions of that material.

Thus if the information was brought to long-term memory in an active way and in the process of solving cognitive tasks it means that the use of that material (or its extraction) will be easy and quick.

The general characteristics of memory also include the peculiarities of reproduction which, in its turn, depends on the conditions of perception. (Cognitive Activity in the System of Memory Processes, 1988). In this sense it can be said that the skill of reproduction depends on the skill of perception, and the art of oral reading also contributes to the development of reproduction. Thus inner cognitive activity of a student is the main factor which determines the efficiency of memory. And if the material is analyzed deeper memorizing is better. In other words, the more pains a student takes to solve certain tasks the higher the level of memorizing is. The more complex the work with the semantic aspect of the language material and the more elements of the word nets are involved in the activity of solving tasks, then the deeper and longer the differently-directed functional changes, which are the traces of the processing of material. (Cognitive Activity in the System of Memory Processes, 1988). Word nets form the physiological basis of long-term memory, they are the central representatives of word signals, they are not isolated but integrated into systems of multiple temporary neuro connections. Word nets make the structural functional basis of all processes of thinking. The conclusion out of this is that teaching reading must be organized on a high level of difficulty and students must be given tasks that involve their intellectual abilities.

When students have acquired the skill of oral reading and begin to read silently, enough attention must be paid to the development of students' awareness of the means of forming and formulating thoughts in reading. This creates the necessary conditions for the development of reflective or metacognitive components of thinking.

All students must be aware of the process of reading, and it means first of all understanding of one's abilities as a reader. Good readers must have good decoding skills and at the same time they need a large amount of contextual support. (Paran, 1996). In every text there are meaningful points or orienting points which help to make predictions, guesses and to contextualize the text. These orienting or meaningful points are words, word combinations, grammatical structures and also world knowledge or background knowledge of a student which allows him to understand the text, to recognize familiar things and to learn new and unknown things (Sokolov, 1941; Vaisburd, M.L. and Blochina, S.A., 1997).

There can be suggested some exercises for the development of the mechanism of predictions, perception and understanding the metacognitive or reflective components of thinking at the primary stage of teaching reading.

To develop the skill of making predictions in reading the following exercises can be done. Before reading the text, students can read the title of the text and write a few words about the theme in the form of one paragraph. They can also write five to six words which, they think, they may come across in the text. Ask students to write as many words as they can which are associated with the suggested key words. Students may look through the first and the last paragraph of the text and write one sentence which will express the main idea of the text. Students may also write 5 – 6 questions, the answers to which they want to get in the text.

Then students read the text once. After reading the text, the following exercises may be done.

- Students must say if their suggestion of the main idea of the text is correct. If not, they must write one more sentence which reflects the main idea.
- Students will say if they have received the answers to their 5 – 6 questions.
- After that, students will read the text for the second time. They look through each paragraph and underline the sentence which generalizes the content of the paragraph.
- Then students look through the other remaining sentences in the paragraph and say if they are connected with the underlined ones. If yes, then how.

These exercises will help to form the metacognitive awareness of students and make their reading correct and mature.

To develop metacognitive or reflective components of thinking, students must be aware of the following things. They must know that good readers

- keep the content of the text in memory,
- read by long phrases,
- omit words the meanings of which are not important for understanding and
- think well of themselves as readers (Carrel, 1989).

The ways of realizing metacognitive or reflective processes in reading can be achieved through the following:

- paraphrasing or adapting the text and reproducing it in a simpler form,
- making clear difficult things later after reading, and
- putting forward problems in reading.

This article has looked at the problem of teaching reading in a foreign language. There has been an attempt to prove that oral reading is an important stage in the development of reading as a language art and one of the aims of foreign language learning is to acquire the skill of marking intonation in the printed text. It will help to develop the mechanism of predictions, perception and understanding in mature reading. When students begin to read silently, all tasks must be of a rather high level of difficulty which makes memory better. A lot of attention must also be paid to the development of the reflective or metacognitive components of thinking. Success in teaching reading depends much on the means and ways of realizing how the process of thinking is being carried out to make reading correct and mature.

References

Carrel, P.L. 1989. Metacognitive Awareness and Second Language Reading. *The Modern Language Journal,* 73 (2):121-134.

Chuprikova N.I. (ed.) 1988. *Cognitive Activity in the System of Memory Processes.* Moscow: Pedagogica.

Faaborg-Anderson, K. & Edfeldt, A.V. 1958. Electromyography of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Laryngeal Muscles During Silent Speech. Correlation With Reading. *Acta Oto-Laryngology,* 49 (6):478-489.

Hawkins, B. 1991. Teaching Children to Read in a Foreign Language. In *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.

Kamenskaya, O.L. 1990. *Text and Communication*. Moscow: Progress.

Leontjev, A.N. 1972. *Problems of the Development of Psyche*. Moscow: Moscow State University. 304p.

Losev, A. Ph. 1982. *Sign. Symbol. Myth*. Moscow: Moscow State University.

Paran, Amos. 1996 Reading in EFL: Facts and Fiction. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 50 (1):25-34.

Sokolov, A.N. 1978. Psychophysiological Research of Inner Speech as a Mechanism of Thinking. In *Problems of General Educational Psychology and Psychology of Age Groups*. Moscow: Moscow State University. pp.136-152.

Sokolov, A.N. 1941. *Inner Speech and Understanding. Scientific Papers of the State Research Institute of Psychology*, vol.2. Moscow.

Vaisburd, M.L. & Blochina, S.A. 1997. Teaching Understanding a Text in a Foreign Language as a Searching Acitvity. Inostrannie Yaziki v Shkole. *Foreign Languages at School*, vol.2.

Velichkovskiy, B.M. & Usacheva, I.V. 1989. Psychology of Teaching Reading Abroad. In: *Abstracts of the Papers of the Conference "Psychological and Educational Problems of Teaching Coding Skills, Sense Perception and Understanding"*. Moscow: Moscow State University.

Voloshnikiv, V.N. 1930. *Marxism and Philosophy of Language. 2nd edition*. Leningrad: Priboy.

Zhinkin, N.I. 1978. Voluntary and Involuntary Management of Sound Mechanism of Singing and Speech. Voprosy Psichologii. *Issues of Psychology*, n.4.

Zhinkin, N.I. 1958. *Mechanisms of Speech*. Moscow: Academy of Educational Sciences.