

INTRODUCTION TO TEFL: Session 5(b) READING SKILLS

In everyday life there is a proliferation of reading material. Whether it be newspapers, magazines, journals, posters, product packaging, teletext, e-mail, intranet or internet, we are all at the mercy of reading texts. In fact, for many people, text messaging has become a way of life.

Reading is very much an ACTIVE process where the reader brings their own pre-existing knowledge about the subject matter into play. In the case of the learner reading texts are used primarily for two purposes. That is, in developing reading comprehension and for learning new language.

When teaching reading skills to our students we need to consider 3 main stages, namely pre-reading, reading and post-reading. Let us examine each of these stages on turn :-

(1) PRE-READING. This stage can be further sub-divided into 4 more steps :-

- 1.1 *preparing for silent reading* – decide how you would introduce the text. Then decide which words you would present before reading. Finally, think of some *guiding questions*.
- 1.2 *introducing the text* – introduce the theme of the text, prior to reading, help Ss by giving them some idea of the content and increases their interest by *motivating* them to read the text.
- 1.3 *presenting new vocabulary* – we do not need to pre-teach all the new vocabulary to the students. It is important to allow them to guess the meanings of some words from context. This is called *inference*.
- 1.4 *using guided questions* – such questions give the reader a *purpose* to read by asking them to look for something as they read. Such questions should be designed to guide the reader towards the main points of the text. Guided questions should focus solely on general meaning and avoid details. Furthermore, they should be quite brief, relatively easy to answer and avoid directing the reader to the most important points raised in the text.

(2) READING

There are 3 possible variations here with 2.1 being the usual method :-

- 2.1 Ss all read silently to themselves
- 2.2 T reads aloud, while Ss follow in their books
- 2.3 Ss read aloud in turn

(3) POST-READING

This latter stage basically involves 'follow-up' activities. If reading texts contain language that is useful for Ss to produce, as well as comprehend, they can be used as a basis for language practice. As such, there are several ways of doing this. These are some of the most popular suggestions :-

- (i) Discussion questions
- (ii) Reproducing the text
- (iii) Role-play
- (iv) Gap-filling

[Please note, (i) and (iii) focus on the theme of the text, whereas (ii) and (iv) focus on the language]