

DOI : 10.33274/2079-4835-2018-17-2-49-55

UDC 378.81.111

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**ACTIVATING STUDENTS' BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE
AND ITS CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK IN TEACHING READING**

УДК 378.81.111

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**АКТИВАЦІЯ ПЕРВИННИХ ЗНАНЬ СТУДЕНТА ТА ЇХ КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНА
ОСНОВА У ПРОЦЕСІ НАВЧАННЯ ЧИТАННЯ**

***Objective.** The objective of the article is to demonstrate the need of activating top-down processing a text in teaching reading; to give examples of different kinds of activities to recall information on the topic; and offer «pre-reading preparatory instruction plan» for developing reading skills.*

***Methods.** Methodological basis of the present research presupposes the following kinds of analysis: analytical; analysis and synthesis of scientific, popular scientific, methodical and educational literature on the problems of teaching reading and the argumentation of detailed reading lesson planning.*

***Results.** This article deals with the argumentation for the activating of top-down processing a text in teaching reading. The author introduces such skills as «predicting» and «pre-viewing» to encourage the use of prior knowledge of students, gives examples of different kinds of activities to recall information on the topic: brainstorming; structured writing; field trips; role plays; word association activities; content mapping; semantic mapping. Author also offers «pre-reading preparatory instruction plan» for developing reading skills which intends to make readers aware of what they already know about a topic to be read about and to activate their memory and expectations. Three phases of this plan is supplied. It was proved that with course goals and objectives in mind, teachers plan WHAT the students will study in class, HOW activities are done, WHY — the reasons behind the decisions. In general-to-specific order then, teachers are responsible for course goals, objectives, and activities.*

***Key words:** activity, reading skills, top-down processing, predicting, previewing, pre-reading preparatory instruction plan.*

Problem statement. At the present stage of world space development, improving the quality of training of future specialists who are competitive on the European labour market is becoming one of the priority directions of the Bologna process.

The solution to this problem is related to the education content modernization, the optimization of the resources and technologies of the educational process organization and, of course, rethinking the goals and results of education.

To have only objective knowledge is not enough for a man of today, he needs the skills and abilities that will allow to be engaged in cultural-behavioral activities. In other words, the domestic high school needs to shift the emphasis from a knowledge-oriented to a competency-based approach in education.

Competency-based approach involves the development of such competencies as linguistic, speech, socio-political, informational, socio-cultural, general educational. One of the most important conditions for forming the competencies mentioned above is reading.

The issue of reading has been repeatedly considered in pedagogical practice and in foreign languages teaching methods: the psychological aspect of this process was highlighted, ways of its improvement and optimization were outlined.

But the activating of students' background knowledge for improving reading skills is in the process of constant development and scientists' search.

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Analysis of recent research and publications. Many well-known educators, methodologists, psychologists such as I. Bim, S. Klychnikova, S. Plotnikov, O. Rozov, M. Svitlovska, S. Folomkina and others devoted their researches to various aspects of teaching reading. The problem of selecting the educational material and defining the content of students training for reading professionally oriented texts is memorialized in the writings of such researchers as H. Barabanova, T. Sierov, O. Hryniuk, T. Vdovina, N. Hez, K. Kuscko and others. The problem of teaching professional foreign literature reading was considered in various aspects by such scholars as N. Halskova, M. Liakhovytskyi, L. Onufrieva, H. Cherednichenko and others. The problems of teaching reading as an independent form of speech activity were dealt with by O. Vyshnevskyi, Ye. Itelson, S. Nikolaieva, K. Onyshchenko, H. Rohova and others.

There is also a large number of dissertations, in which the cognitive-communicative method of teaching foreign-language reading was investigated (H. Barabanova, T. Shevchenko), a method of teaching foreign-language texts independent reading (M. Aliieva, N. Mazazova, I. Trofimova), professionally directed and specialized courses of teaching foreign language reading were prepared.

By reading they understand the process of reception of graphically fixed text, the result of which is the creation of meanings conditioned by linguistic and extra-linguistic competencies of an individual.

But, despite the number of publications devoted to this issue, domestic researches still have problematic aspects.

Statement of basic materials. In one current perspective on reading comprehension, the reading process is an interaction between a reader's prior knowledge and the information encoded in the text. The interactive model has recently been studied under the rubric of schema theory [3, p. 14-17]. This theoretical framework emphasizes that the reader is an active participant who can contribute to the construction of meaning. When reading, students interpret the text in light of their previous knowledge and simultaneously modify their original schemata as new information is learned.

From this perspective, there are two simultaneous and complementary ways of processing a text: top-down and bottom-up [3, p. 43-45]. In top-down processing, readers use their prior knowledge to make predictions about the text. In bottom-up processing, readers rely on their knowledge of language to recognize linguistic elements — letters, words, and sentence structure — for the construction of meaning. It is logical to suppose that readers must understand the individual parts of the text before they can grasp the overall meaning; but in practice, effective readers continually adopt a top-down approach to predict the probable theme and then move to the bottom-up approach to check their assumption by reading details. This implies that in teaching reading, teachers should instruct students to start their reading by using a top-down approach and later switch between the two approaches, as each kind of interpretation supports the other.

Bottom-up processing is natural when a person first reads a second or foreign language. This is partly due to the reader's own «theory» of how to read, partly the result of a

lack of confidence, and partly a realistic response for readers who have acquired very little of a new language.

Students need to learn, therefore, a little about the reading process and especially the fact that it is not the same thing as translating. They also need to learn the importance of their prior knowledge in making sense of a text. In other words, they need to develop their top-down processing mode.

Readers benefit in three main ways from having an introduction to the topic of an informational text before they begin to read [3, p. 67-68]. First, an introduction helps students to recall any information that they may already know about the topic, either from personal experience or other reading. If the students keep this knowledge in mind as they read, they increase their opportunities to make sense of the information they find in the text. An introduction may also bring to mind cultural factors that help them understand the new material, thus enhancing comprehension. Second, getting the students to start to think about the topic should increase their interest in the topic and thereby motivate them to read the text. Third, if the introduction activity is conducted in the foreign language, it will also review or introduce the relevant vocabulary for that topic.

There are a variety of activities that students can engage in to recall information on the topic: brainstorming; structured writing; field trips; role plays; word association activities (students connect words that have a similar meaning); content mapping (students write down any information that comes to mind on the topic, then mark the sentences in the reading with content similar to what they wrote); semantic mapping (students write down any words that come to mind on the topic and then circle and connect the words that are closely related).

Many reading skills encourage the use of prior knowledge as well. But, before working on a skill for the first time, always begin with a rationale for doing the exercises. [5, p. 103] Explain what the skill is and why it can improve reading ability in English. This helps the students put the skill in context and builds conscious of the skill as a strategy to use whenever it is required.

The first skill to begin the work with is previewing.

Previewing is a high-speed reading skill. It is a powerful skill because by previewing, the reader gains enough information from the text to begin hypothesizing about it and to begin the cognitive process of matching new information with what is already known. In our daily lives we preview automatically. When we receive a letter, we check the return address, the postmark, the style of the stationery, the handwriting and other characteristics before we open it. We want to know what to expect. And before most people decide to read a book, they preview it by reading the front and back covers and the table of contents, and the author's name; they note the book's length and other features. If you look over the text before you read, you will help yourself understand and remember what you read.

How to introduce the skill of previewing [1, p. 34-36]? Assign a chapter from any collection of short selections which are followed by about ten questions. Tell the students that they will have two minutes to preview. Then tell them to answer the questions without reading the passage. This activity usually amazes the students, because they often find they can answer several of the questions correctly without even reading the passage! Many students gain confidence from this demonstration.

On the other hand, some students do not agree the guessing is «really reading», and they say that they think guessing is «cheating». It is important to discuss this issue with the class, because, in fact, accessing background knowledge and guessing make it possible to be an affective reader. You can point out that the students understand and remember what they read because of their prior knowledge and because of their ability to guess.

There are some steps in previewing to follow: 1. Read the title. 2. Look at any pictures. 3. Notice if the text is divided into parts. 4. Read the first sentence of each paragraph. 5. Read

the last paragraph or at least the last sentence. 6. Notice names, numbers, dates, and words that stand out.

What are the benefits of previewing [1, p. 37-38]?

1. Previewing allows the reader to establish the genre, context, topic, level of difficulty, and organization of the text to be read.

2. Once aware of the topic, the students' activated background knowledge allows them to read for meaning, even if many of the words in the text are unfamiliar.

3. Students realize once again that it is not necessary to read every word in order to understand and gain information from a text.

4. Previewing trains the students in the habit of a quick «once-over» before reading, the groundwork for learning to skim, and much more complicated task.

Once students have learned to preview, the previewing step should be indicated whenever the students are given a reading assignment. Each time a class begins a new book, they should take a few minutes to preview the text before they begin to use it.

The next skill to encourage the use of prior knowledge of students is predicting

Predicting should be introduced as a specific skill. As always, the introduction of a new skill requires a rationale: before you read, you can do something to improve your understanding; you can guess what will be in a passage. This is called predicting [2, p. 118-120]. When there is a title, a picture, or some other information about what you will read, stop and think! When you predict you find out [1, p. 38]:

a. what kind of text you will read. Is it a newspaper article, a story, an advertisement, a textbook, a recipe, a letter, or what?

b. what you already know about what you will read.

c. how carefully you want to read it. Will you read to remember every word? Will you scan, for one to two pieces of information? Will you read for pleasure, with no need to remember?

In practice, we know that predicting is usually unconscious and is done prior to reading. But for the purpose of highlighting the process of predicting, it is necessary to give the students some training with exercises which isolate the skill. Naturally, students should be instructed to apply the skill whenever they read, and predicting should be an explicit part of all-class, intensive reading lessons.

Working in groups of four or five students may predict from the pictures, make a story from pictures, predict from a table of contents, from titles and headlines, predict what will come next in the story; explain their reasons and compare what each group produces.

PreP (Pre-reading Preparatory Instruction) is another way to help students activate concepts and background knowledge before they read, and it provides a systematic way to apply the skills of previewing and predicting. PreP is a «pre-reading plan intended to make readers aware of what they already know about a topic to be read about and to activate their memory and expectations.» It is a form of brainstorming. Students can learn to follow the PreP steps before they read alone, and PreP can be included in the pre-reading activity before an all-class intensive reading lesson.

The procedure of PreP [1, p. 41-42] requires almost no teacher preparation, and it can be used with any text at every language proficiency level. It also provides the teacher with reliable feedback for estimating the students' conceptual and linguistic background knowledge about a topic. This procedure consists of three phases:

1. Select a key word, phrase or picture from the text which will stimulate group discussion. Ask the students to make associations with this word, phrase, or picture. List all their associations on the blackboard.

2. The students tell the reasons for the associations they have made. This reflecting step activates a network of additional associations; as they discuss their initial associations, students will be reminded of other related ideas.

3. Ask the students for additional associations which have come to mind during the discussion and write these on the blackboard as well.

Langer [4, p. 18], who introduced this procedure, found that «the three levels of response elicited by the PreP not only help the students to comprehend a text, but greatly facilitate the student's ability to recall the text after reading».

Students should understand why the PreP procedure is useful and what they gain from doing it. In order to stress this, ask your students to evaluate the procedure after they have done it several times. Point out the ways PreP helps students to think and predict before they read, and how such thinking assists in comprehending and remembering.

Students can also do PreP in pairs, using a PreP worksheet that you have devised. Using the title, an accompanying illustration, or the first sentence of the passage as the catalyst, two or three students can perform the steps of associating, reflecting, and further associating together.

The next question for the teacher is how to apply Previewing, Predicting, and PreP [1, p. 43-44]. The following lesson applies these three skills in a model intensive reading lesson:

1. Distribute a one- or two-page passage to the class. It is important that the passage to be interesting and attractive.

2. Tell the students to preview the passage for about two or three minutes.

3. Then tell the students to put the passage aside and ask them to tell what they remember from the preview. Write all their ideas on the blackboard and discuss, following PreP procedure.

4. Next, tell the students to predict what else they might find when they read the passage, based on what they have collectively seen in the preview. Students give reasons for their predictions. These are, in effect, the further associations in PreP.

5. Then assign about ten true/false questions about the text.

6. After they have answered the questions, instruct the students to read the entire article, looking for confirmation of their predictions and verification of their answers to the questions.

7. Finally, give the whole class a chance to discuss the extent to which their predictions proved to be accurate, and why or why not.

What are the benefits of this lesson plan?

This lesson plan is one which could be included in every intensive reading lesson, because student interaction and student/teacher interaction are essential in such lessons. When you explain your own thinking processes, students have an opportunity to discover new ways of thinking about the text. As the students work together, predicting and making associations about the text, they practice the thinking processes involved in relating the text to what they already know. Once they have practiced talking this way together, it is possible for them to internalize these processes and apply them when they read alone.

Conclusions. Having examined specific issues, strategies, and classroom activities for pre-reading, some overarching concerns should be mentioned to keep in mind when planning the reading class [5, p. 15-16]. With course goals and objectives in mind, teachers plan what the students will study in class — that is, the sequence of activities the students will engage in to achieve those objectives. Teachers plan how activities are done — the details about the time, grouping, instructions on how to proceed, and debriefing. In order to make these decisions, teachers need to know why — the reasons behind the decisions. In general-to-specific order then, teachers are responsible for course goals, objectives, and activities.

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Дата надходження рукопису 26.11.2018

***Цель.** Продемонстрировать необходимость активизации процесса работы с текстом «сверху-вниз» при обучении чтению, привести примеры различных видов деятельности по возобновлению информации на изучаемую тему, и предложить «подготовительный план предварительной работы с текстом» для развития навыков чтения.*

***Методы.** Методологическая основа данного исследования предусматривает следующие виды анализа: аналитический; анализ и синтез научной, научно-популярной, методической и учебной литературы по проблемам обучения чтению и аргументации детального планирования занятия по чтению.*

***Результаты.** Статья посвящена аргументации активизации процесса работы с текстом «сверху-вниз» при обучении чтению. Автор описывает такие навыки, как «прогнозирование» и «предварительный просмотр» для фасилитирования использования уже имеющихся знаний студентов, процедуру их введения и преимущества; приводит примеры различных видов деятельности по восстановлению информации по теме: «мозговой штурм»; структурированное письмо; «экскурсии»; ролевые игры; деятельность, связанная с ассоциацией слов; отображение содержания; семантическое отображение. Автор предлагает «подготовительный план предварительной работы с текстом» для развития навыков чтения, который имеет целью способствовать осознанию читателями того, что они уже знают по теме, с которой будут работать во время чтения, и активизировать их память и ожидания. Три этапа этого плана подробно описываются.*

Было доказано, что с учетом целей и задач курса преподаватели планируют, ЧЕМУ студенты будут обучаться в классе, КАК это можно выполнить, ПОЧЕМУ — причины принятия решений. Тогда, в порядке «от общего к частному», преподаватели отвечают за цели и задачи курса, а также деятельность по достижению этих целей.

***Ключевые слова:** деятельность, навыки чтения, обработка текста «сверху-вниз», прогнозирование, предварительный просмотр, подготовительный план предварительной работы с текстом.*

***Мета.** Продемонструвати необхідність активації процесу роботи з текстом «зверху-вниз» при навчанні читання, навести приклади різних видів діяльності з відновлення інформації на тему, що вивчається, і запропонувати «підготовчий план попередньої роботи з текстом» для розвитку навичок читання.*

***Методи.** Методологічна основа дослідження передбачає такі види аналізу: аналітичний; аналіз та синтез наукової, науково-популярної, методичної та навчальної*

літератури з проблем навчання читання та аргументації детального планування заняття з читання.

Результати. Стаття присвячена аргументації активації процесу роботи з текстом «зверху-вниз» при навчанні читання. Автор описує такі навички, як «прогнозування» та «попередній перегляд» задля заохочення використання первинних знань студентів, процедуру їх впровадження та переваги; наводить приклади різних видів діяльності з відновлення інформації на тему: «мозковий штурм»; структуроване письмо; «екскурсії»; рольові ігри; діяльність, пов'язана із асоціацією слів; відображення вмісту; семантичне відображення. Автор також пропонує «підготовчий план попередньої роботи з текстом» для розвитку навичок читання, який має на меті сприяти усвідомленню читачів того, що вони вже знають за темою, з якою будуть працювати під час читання, і активізувати їхню пам'ять та очікування. Три етапи цього плану детально описуються.

Було доведено, що з урахуванням цілей і завдань курсу викладачі планують, ЧОГО студенти будуть навчатися в класі, ЯК це можна виконати, ЧОМУ — причини прийняття рішень. Тоді, в порядку «від загального до конкретного», викладачі відповідають за цілі та завдання курсу, а також діяльність щодо досягнення цих цілей.

Ключові слова: діяльність, навички читання, обробка тексту «зверху-вниз», прогнозування, попередній перегляд, підготовчий план попередньої роботи з текстом.