TEACHING LITERACY SKILLS TO ADULTS:
RIGHT STRATEGIES

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Teaching reading to adults can be a challenge even for experienced educators. Reading is a seven-part process comprising the following steps: recognition, assimilation, comprehension, understanding, retention, recall and communication. Reading also involves very important function, thinking. We can also say that reading is a multi-level process, each of which must be developed if we want to read effectively [1; 18].

The first thing the teacher needs to do is to build rapport with his students. Many adults need to improve their literacy skills in order to get a well-paid job. Motivation is the first step in working with adult students. Next step is to help them build confidence, as they don’t know enough vocabulary, can’t speak without dictionary, they are very slow and it takes a lot of time to get through a few sentences and as a result, the interest in subject matter is soon lost. The key is to help them build confidence, support and encourage learners [2; 266]. As for the educator, he must be patient, positive, respectful and creative.

The more vocabulary an adult knows, the easier it will be to guess the meaning of new words. Different readers approach the same text in different ways, as they are individuals, whose levels of metacognition, reading strategies, lived experience, social and work knowledge, linguistic proficiency, reading competencies, attitude towards reading, are diverse [3; 132]. Because of the different viewer characteristics, teachers’ instruction in reading needs to take into account such diversity when designing lesson plans.

Reading, along with listening is perceived as “receptive” skills and involves highly complex thinking process. The more our students read, the more they become familiar with the vocabulary, idioms, sentence patterns of the new language. There are two types of reading we can ask our students to do: extensive reading or close reading. They can read whole stories or whole books, where they have much to read and they cannot stop to look up every unfamiliar word or to translate every sentence. Students have such a lot of reading to get through, at a level that is really challenging for them- that they have to read for content and meaning. Or we can ask our students to do close reading, where they read a short passage and give close attention to all the details, content, vocabulary and structure [4; 51].

Reading for detail, also means “intensive reading”, that means reading texts closely and carefully trying to understand as many details as possible. Such activity means reading the same text a number of times to make sure that everything is clear and words have been correctly interpreted. Extensive reading, is more used in everyday life, when students need to read fast, often for general understanding, but without such a careful attention to details. When students don’t understand words, they usually keep reading, only to get the general idea [2; 264].
**Skimming and scanning.** Skimming, means quick reading to get the gist of the passage (key topics, main ideas, basic structure). Skimming, a reader finds only important information, but not details. Main function of this reading technique is to find a general overview of the given text. **Scanning,** means reading a text quickly in order to find specific information (name, address, fact, number, date…). Skimming and scanning are two very different strategies for speed reading. They are used with different purposes and they require different reading skills, but both of them are very effective.

**Reading round the class.** Some teachers use this activity, reading aloud during the class, but this technique may not be very effective. Most students are different in class, and round-the-class reading tends to be slow, boring and learners usually are not very active. As alternative the teacher may ask students to retell the story in own words, ask them read and discuss in groups or ask them to act it out. It is up to the teacher which technique to choose [2; 271].

The most important thing in teaching adults is to keep them engaged. Experienced teacher should not just pay attention to those who participate actively during the lesson, but try to include everybody in class equally, asking questions to those who are less quieter. Make sure that everybody gets a chance to speak and practice their new skills. The teacher shouldn’t forget about interesting topics for discussion, as the more they talk, the better their English will become.

The main goal in teaching reading is comprehension: people read to learn and understand the language. Fluency is the ability to read easily. Fluent reading shows that reader can stop at appropriate point to make sense of the text. Reading vocabulary comprises those words that we know and understand as we read. We can know the meaning of a word when we hear it spoken, but still not be able to read it in print. The key to communicating in any language is having vocabulary to assist in expressing meaning.

**References:**