

## **Main Approaches in Teaching Reading and their Role in "Modern Teaching of Persian Language"**

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### **1- Introduction**

Reading is recognized as the essential part of scientific learning and development of awareness, the basis for teaching other language skills, and one of the most important goals of teaching language. Bernhard believes that reading is the only goal of learning a foreign language.

Reading is the process of perceiving and interpreting encoded information through writing. Bernstein and Tigermann consider reading as the product of cognitive and language abilities as well as previous knowledge. In their opinion, the reader should employ processes such as audio-visual perception, cognitive abilities (attention and memory), language knowledge and past experience in order to establish a connection between printed letters and their meaning.

In teaching reading programs, teachers must be aware of the important connection between reader, reading and development of other language skills. They should consider reading as the central language skill in teaching and then, through effective reading instruction, promote the development of other language skills.

### **2- Theoretical framework**

Cognitive, spoken and visual processes are counted as the processes involved in reading comprehension. Eye movements and brain activity during reading, considered to be among visual processes, have provided the utmost information on reading approaches.

Grabe divides processes affecting reading comprehension into low and high levels. Low level processes include phonological encoding, lexical retrieval, syntactic segmentation and semantic encoding by syntactic information and word meaning. High-level processes involve using prior knowledge and global knowledge. On this basis, bottom-up and top-down approaches are formed and an interactive approach to reading is developed by combining them. Interactive approach is regarded as the

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most comprehensive description of the process of reading. Each of the three approaches includes different models and Neil Anderson has proposed the most systematic model of teaching reading based on the interactive approach. Anderson's model consists of six principles from the initial letters of which, the term ACTIVE is formed:

1. activate prior knowledge (A)
2. cultivate vocabulary (C)
3. teach for comprehension (T)
4. increase reading fluency (I)
5. verify reading strategies (V)
6. evaluate progress (E)

### **3- Methodology**

The four skill series *Modern Teaching of Persian Language* (Ghabool, 2013) which is a new teaching resource for non-Persian speakers includes six volumes of which the first to fifth one have been published. The series is now being taught in some Arabic countries and Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Center for Teaching Persian to Non-Persian Speakers. Due to the influence of this series and the major role of reading skill in language learning, reading texts of this work were evaluated on the basis of Neil Anderson's model.

The survey includes 28 lessons which enjoy reading texts. Components of each lesson are evaluated with the principles, techniques and sub-techniques of Anderson's model and the result of evaluation is inserted on a table specific to each volume. Titles which were not used in the teaching series have been ignored in the tables.

### **4- Discussion**

Comparing data obtained from the analysis of the five volumes shows that as the students' knowledge increases the type of exercises change and larger parts of Anderson's model are used at higher levels. Thus, in the first volume, the focus is on cultivating vocabulary and activating prior knowledge, but from the second volume on, verifying reading strategies, increasing reading fluency and teaching for comprehension are also considered but in a lesser degree. In general, the five volumes mostly emphasize on expanding vocabulary which is affected by the bottom-up approach. The sixth principle, "evaluate progress" is ignored due to its time consuming characteristic in this four-skill teaching series.

### **5- Conclusion and suggestion**

In *Modern Teaching of Persian Language*, the principles proposed by Neil Anderson have been applied in varying ratios. In terms of arrangement of teaching materials, some differences are found in the series with Anderson's organizing and

ordering of techniques and sub-techniques. For example, discussing about topic and subject which is specific to pre-reading stage has been planned after reading the text. In addition, some of Anderson's concepts have been used with different interpretations and applications such as "thinking" which doesn't coincide exactly with think-aloud concept discussed in the model. It should be noted that the full implementation of Anderson's principles is easier in resources specific to reading than in four-skill teaching resources where a limited part of learning time is allocated to reading.

According to the above, it is proposed that in the future revisions of the series, principles and techniques proposed by Anderson, should be sufficiently employed for teaching reading especially in the third, fourth and fifth volumes. In addition, it is recommended that more effective efforts should be made to facilitate vocabulary learning process in each lesson.

Reading skill; processes involved in reading; bottom-up, top-down and interactive approaches

**Key Words:** Reading skill; processes involved in reading; bottom-up, top-down and interactive approaches.

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