

Reading Aloud in EFL Revisited

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This paper highlights the functions of reading aloud and gives various reasons justifying its practice in the foreign language classroom. In this connection, the paper suggests a dual approach for practising both reading aloud and silent reading. The paper is mainly concerned with ELT in the Arab world, but its findings are relevant to foreign language teaching in other countries as well.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article has developed out of my 16-year experience as an inspector of English Language Teaching (ELT) and later as an instructor of applied linguistics for 14 years. Through my observation of English classes, I have noticed that the time students are involved in reading aloud is very little; whereas silent reading has the lion's share of the teaching/learning time. Moreover students are, generally, deficient in reading aloud. This paper will justify the teaching of oral reading in the foreign language programme, in particular within cultural contexts which place a high value on the skill of reading aloud.

Reading aloud effectively is characterised by the clear articulation of words, flexibility in rate, volume and tone, adequate phrasing and effective use of pauses and these are inadequately developed in classes I have observed. Moreover EFL teachers do not insist on a high standard when their students read aloud, which results in poor reading skills overall.

The question is, then, how can students develop smooth and intelligible oral reading in the absence of the opportunity to practise this skill sufficiently? This situation becomes more serious when we know that English is taught in our area as a foreign language and in a foreign context where students have very few occasions for exposure to the language. It is relevant to consider aspects of the local culture which underlie the present study and which are largely typical of English language teaching in the Arab world.

1.1 ELT IN THE ARAB WORLD:

- a) English is taught in schools as a foreign language, mostly for instrumental purposes.
- b) All state schools, at all levels, use the same syllabus and the same textbooks assigned by the Ministry of Education.

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