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### IMPROVING LEARNERS' READING SKILLS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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#### Abstract

Reading is one of the fundamental language skills necessary for effective communication and academic success in a foreign language. Developing strong reading skills enables learners to comprehend, analyze, and critically evaluate texts, which in turn supports their overall language proficiency. This article explores various strategies and approaches to improve learners' reading skills in foreign languages, including extensive and intensive reading, use of authentic materials, vocabulary development, and interactive reading activities. The study also highlights the role of motivation, cultural context, and technological tools in enhancing reading comprehension. Ultimately, this paper provides practical recommendations for language teachers to design effective reading instruction that caters to diverse learner needs.

**Keywords:** reading skills, foreign language learning, reading comprehension, vocabulary development, extensive reading, intensive reading, language teaching strategies.

#### Introduction

In the context of foreign language learning, reading plays a crucial role in developing learners' overall language competence. Reading comprehension is not merely about decoding words but involves understanding, interpreting and critically engaging with texts. As learners progress in their language journey, improving reading skills helps them access a wider range of materials, facilitates independent learning and enhances their cultural awareness. However, many learners face challenges such as limited vocabulary, unfamiliar grammar structures and lack of motivation, which can hinder their reading progress. Therefore, it is essential for educators to implement effective strategies to support learners in developing their reading skills.



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### **The importance of reading skills in foreign language learning**

Reading is one of the most essential skills in learning a foreign language. It plays a vital role in helping learners understand the structure, vocabulary and cultural context of the target language. Reading is a receptive skill that provides learners with input necessary for language acquisition. It exposes learners to different language structures, idiomatic expressions and cultural references. Proficient reading skills allow learners to gain knowledge, improve other language skills such as writing and speaking and prepare for academic or professional purposes. In foreign language contexts, reading also boosts learners' confidence and autonomy.

Reading exposes learners to a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures in context. Unlike isolated vocabulary lists or grammar rules, reading provides natural examples of how language is used. This helps learners remember and apply new words and forms more effectively. The more students read, the more they become familiar with common phrases, sentence patterns and idiomatic expressions. Reading enhances overall language comprehension. It trains the brain to recognize patterns, infer meaning, and build connections. Through different types of texts—such as stories, articles and dialogues—students learn how ideas are organized, how to follow arguments and how to understand both literal and implied meanings. These skills are critical for academic success and real-life communication.

Furthermore, reading improves writing skills. By observing how native speakers' structure sentences and paragraphs, learners begin to write more clearly and accurately. Reading also sparks creativity and encourages students to express their own ideas more confidently in writing.

In addition, reading supports independent learning. Students can choose materials that interest them, making learning more enjoyable and motivating. Whether reading for pleasure or for study, learners build autonomy and confidence in their language abilities.

### **Strategies to improve reading skills**

**Extensive and intensive reading.** Extensive reading involves learners reading large amounts of text for general understanding and enjoyment. It helps increase fluency and vocabulary in a natural context. On the other hand, intensive reading focuses on



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detailed comprehension of shorter texts, encouraging learners to analyze grammar, vocabulary and text structure. Both approaches complement each other and should be integrated into teaching.

**Using authentic materials.** Authentic materials such as newspapers, blogs, brochures and videos provide learners with real-life language exposure. These materials help learners relate to the cultural and social aspects of the target language, making reading more engaging and meaningful.

**Vocabulary development.** A rich vocabulary is essential for reading comprehension. Teachers should focus on teaching high-frequency words, using context clues and encouraging learners to keep vocabulary journals. Pre-reading activities that introduce key vocabulary can prepare learners for better comprehension.

**Interactive reading activities.** Involving learners in interactive activities such as group discussions, summarizing, predicting content and question-answer sessions promotes active engagement with texts. Interactive and engaging activities help learners apply reading strategies and develop deeper comprehension. Such activities develop critical thinking and help learners internalize reading strategies. Here are some examples:

### 1. Pre-reading activities

- Predicting content from titles/images
- Brainstorming topic-related vocabulary
- Discussing background knowledge
- Teaching key vocabulary before reading

### 2. While-reading activities

- True/false or multiple-choice questions
- Matching paragraphs with headings
- Filling in the blanks from the text
- Highlighting new vocabulary
- Asking comprehension questions

### 3. Post reading activities

- Summarizing the text in own words
- Group discussion or debates



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- Role-playing based on the text
- Writing a response or opinion
- Creating a quiz from the reading

#### 4. Interactive activities

- Jigsaw reading: Divide text into sections. Each group reads a different part and teaches it to others.
- Think-pair-share: Students think about a question, discuss with a partner, then share with the class.
- Text annotation: Students highlight and comment on interesting or confusing parts of the text.

These kind of reading activities give students motivation to learn foreign languages.

### **The role of motivation and technology.**

Motivation and technology play a significant role in the development of reading skills, especially in foreign language learning. When combined effectively, they can transform reading from a passive activity into an engaging, interactive, and rewarding experience. Motivation greatly influences learners' reading habits and persistence. Teachers should create a supportive and stimulating environment, set achievable goals and provide positive feedback. Additionally, technology offers various tools such as e-books, online dictionaries and reading apps that can support learners' reading practice anytime and anywhere.

### **Motivation: The Driving Force Behind Reading**

Motivation is a key factor that influences how much and how well students read. Learners who are motivated are more likely to choose to read in their free time, engage with challenging texts, and persist in understanding difficult vocabulary or grammar. Motivation can be **intrinsic** (enjoying the act of reading itself) or **extrinsic** (reading to pass exams, receive praise, or gain rewards). Teachers can boost motivation by:

- Selecting interesting and relevant reading materials.
- Giving students choice in what they read.
- Setting clear reading goals.



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- Creating a supportive and encouraging classroom environment.

When learners see reading as useful and enjoyable, they are more likely to develop a lifelong habit of reading.

### Technology: Enhancing Access and Interaction

Technology offers powerful tools to support and enhance reading. Digital platforms, apps, and online libraries provide learners with access to a wide variety of texts at different levels and on many topics. Interactive features—such as built-in dictionaries, audio support, comprehension quizzes, and progress tracking—make reading more accessible and user-friendly.

E-books, audiobooks, and reading apps like **Newsela**, **LingQ**, or **Epic!** allow students to read at their own pace, receive instant feedback, and enjoy multimedia content that supports understanding. In classrooms, smartboards, tablets, and educational websites can make reading activities more dynamic and collaborative. Technology also supports **personalized learning**. It allows teachers to assign readings that match students' interests and reading levels, track progress, and adapt materials to individual needs. As a result, students feel more in control of their learning, which increases their motivation and confidence.

Both motivation and technology are essential for developing effective reading skills. Motivation gives students the desire to read, while technology provides the tools to make reading easier, more enjoyable, and more interactive. When used together, they create a powerful combination that helps learners become confident, independent readers in a foreign language.

### Conclusion

Reading is a cornerstone of foreign language learning. It strengthens vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension, and supports the development of writing and speaking. Therefore, teachers and learners should give reading a central place in the language learning process. Improving reading skills in foreign languages requires a multifaceted approach that combines extensive and intensive reading, authentic materials, vocabulary enhancement, and interactive tasks. Teachers should also consider learners' motivation and leverage technological resources to create



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effective and engaging reading instruction. By addressing these aspects, learners can develop stronger reading proficiency, which is fundamental for their success in language learning and beyond.

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