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EFFICIENT PREPARATION FOR INTERNATIONAL EXAM TOEFL AND SOME IMPORTANT TOOLS OF DEALING WITH ITS READING SECTION

ЕФЕКТИВНА ПІДГОТОВКА ДО МІЖНАРОДНОГО ІСПИТУ “ТОІФЛ” ТА ВАЖЛИВІ ІНСТРУМЕНТИ ЩОДО РОБОТИ З РОЗДІЛОМ ЧИТАННЯ

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The article examines the importance of reading comprehension in second-language learning, with particular attention to preparation for the TOEFL Reading section. It analyzes the main benefits, characteristics, and strategies that make reading effective.

Reading plays a key role in language development. It allows learners to acquire grammar naturally through exposure to authentic sentence structures, verb tenses, and word order. Repeated contact with texts helps develop an intuitive sense of correctness, improving both fluency and listening skills. Reading also strengthens writing ability, as learners absorb organization patterns, vocabulary and stylistic features from well-written texts. Moreover, regular reading reshapes cognition by training the brain to process phrases as meaningful units instead of translating word by word, which makes comprehension more automatic. It also enhances cultural awareness by introducing social norms, values, humor, and idiomatic expressions.

Effective reading requires suitable strategies. Texts should match the learner's level to avoid frustration or lack of challenge. Consistent practice is more productive than irregular reading. Learners should focus on overall meaning rather than stopping for every unfamiliar word, developing tolerance for ambiguity. Active engagement, varied materials, and vocabulary growth through context are essential.

The article also describes the TOEFL Reading section, which includes academic passages and three question types: Standard Multiple Choice, Inserting a Sentence, and Reading to Learn. Time management, strategic preparation, and strong vocabulary knowledge are emphasized as key factors for success.

In conclusion, reading is a flexible and motivating tool that builds fluency, independence, confidence and cultural understanding, making it essential for language mastery and academic achievement.

Key words: globalization of education, international foreign language exams, technique of reading, exam structure, TOEFL.

Стаття розглядає значення читання з розумінням у процесі вивчення іноземної мови, приділяючи увагу підготовці до розділу Reading тесту TOEFL. У ній аналізуються основні переваги, характеристики та стратегії, що забезпечують ефективність читання.

Читання відіграє важливу роль у мовному розвитку. Воно дає змогу засвоювати граматику природним шляхом через ознайомлення з автентичними структурами речень, часовими формами та порядком слів. Постійний контакт із текстами формує інтуїтивне відчуття правильності мовлення, сприяє розвитку мовленнєвої плавності й навичок аудіювання. Читання також покращує письмові вміння, адже здобувачі засвоюють способи організації думок, лексику та стилістичні особливості якісних текстів. Регулярне читання змінює когнітивні процеси, навчаючи сприймати словосполучення як цілісні смислові одиниці, а не перекладати кожне слово окремо, що робить розуміння більш автоматичним. Воно сприяє й культурній обізнаності, знайомлячи з соціальними нормами, цінностями та ідіоматичними виразами.

Ефективне читання потребує відповідних стратегій. Тексти мають відповідати рівню здобувача, щоб уникнути розчарування або недостатньої складності. Регулярна практика є продуктивнішою, ніж епізодичне читання. Важливо зосереджуватися на загальному змісті, не зупиняючись на кожному незнайомому слові. Активна робота з текстом і поповнення словникового запасу через контекст є необхідними умовами.

У статті описано розділ читання тесту TOEFL, що містить академічні тексти та три типи завдань: множинний вибір, вставлення речення та узагальнення змісту. Наголошується на важливості тайм-менеджменту, підготовки та достатнього словникового запасу.

У підсумку, читання постає як ефективний інструмент формування мовної компетентності та академічних досягнень.

Ключові слова: глобалізація освіти, міжнародні іспити з іноземної мови, техніка читання, структура іспиту, TOEFL.

Overcoming language barriers has become essential capacity for young professionals in diverse fields within the globalized world. Studying abroad pro-

vides access to high-quality professional education and significantly expands career opportunities for the younger generation. Exposure to different approaches

to learning helps students integrate into the global educational environment.

Nowadays the Ukrainian educational system provided favorable conditions for young Ukrainians to study abroad. For ensuring the students' mobility and giving a chance to continue further education abroad or searching for future career with recognized qualifications, most of the Bologna standards in Ukraine were applied such as European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) which was introduced in Ukraine in 2009, credit attachment which is issued only together with the university diploma and is made in Ukrainian and English [1].

The variety of international tests for English level assessment is vast. There are some tests designed for some special purposes, for example, GRE (the Graduate Record Examination) is mostly specialized in Psychology; GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test) is created for management; TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) is to measure the everyday English skills of people working in an international environment; APIEL (Advanced Placement International English Language Test) is developed by the College Entrance Examination Board in New York; CPE (Certificate of Proficiency in English) and CAE (Certificate in Advanced English) award certificates of University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations.

Most foreign educational institutions, migration services to give you a residence permit or a work permit; medical and licensing agencies for certification; employers in order to assess the level of your English proficiency, different agencies and other organizations in many countries require the results of the international exams such as IELTS and TOEFL. The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System) are two widely accepted international exams that measure the English proficiency of non-native speakers. They are commonly used for university admissions, immigration purposes, and professional qualifications. Both tests are valid for two years, last about two to three hours, and assess skills in reading, listening, writing, and speaking. In our article Reading Section of TOEFL exam is being taken into focus.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

On the Eastern Washington University's website in 2022 the rubric was published which provides a well-structured and informative overview of the importance of reading comprehension in education and everyday life. It clearly explains why reading comprehension is a complex cognitive skill and highlights key strategies such as visualization, goal set-

ting and connecting new knowledge with prior experience. The author effectively supports the discussion with expert opinions and practical examples, making the argument convincing and accessible. "Reading comprehension is essential for language and literature, as well as developing a student's critical thinking and memory skills focus and their ability to solve problems – all necessary for every kind of student or professional" [2]. So, we may conclude that reading comprehension is a foundational skill essential for academic success, professional effectiveness,

James Clements who is an independent English adviser, supporting schools and local authorities across the country in his practical review "Teaching Comprehension Background Questions" explains: "Reading comprehension is the ability to read text, process it and understand its meaning. It relies on two, interconnected abilities: word reading (being able to decode the symbols on the page) and language comprehension (being able to understand the meaning of the words and sentences)" [3]. The author says that reading comprehension is an active process in which readers construct a mental representation of meaning rather than simply recalling words. It clearly emphasizes the role of comprehension in engagement, learning, and enjoyment of reading. By referencing a key academic source and posing relevant background questions, the text encourages deeper exploration of how comprehension develops and can be effectively taught.

Ukrainian philologists Yurko N.A., Protsenko U.M. in their research "Reading Comprehension: The Significance, Features and Strategies" (2021) state that "Proficient reading is naturally determined by the individual's cognitive development and depends greatly on the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly" [4]. The authors suggest that although considerable attention has been given to various educational concerns and different aspects of language learning, there remains a need for a more in-depth focus on reading comprehension in foreign language education.

The relevance of the research topic is determined by the growing demand for high-quality preparation for international examinations, which enables young people to integrate effectively into the global educational environment. According to R. Kravets, the Ukrainian system of higher education should place greater emphasis on the development of English-language proficiency, as it allows the younger generation to expand their academic and professional knowledge through access to specialized sources in English. "The foreign language serves not only as a means of intercultural communication, enhancing

cultural relations and increasing educational opportunities, but also as a means of forming the professional and multicultural competences” [5, p. 24]. The scholar emphasizes that a foreign language functions not only as a tool of intercultural communication that strengthens cultural interaction and broadens educational opportunities, but also as an important means of shaping professional and multicultural competences.

Statement of the unresolved aspects of the overall problem. In this article the principal issues related to reading in foreign language learning were examined and identified through monitoring and comparative analysis of online resources. Overall, the article persuasively highlights the need for the young generation to broaden the knowledge, abilities and as a result to obtain some higher quality opportunities and perspectives.

Frank Smith offered a wonderful metaphor on the transformative power of languages: “One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way” [6] showing that each additional foreign language gained through the reading and many other means expands our world. In daily life as well as in the study process reading provides rich, repeated, meaningful input because it feeds vocabulary, grammar, writing, comprehension, and cultural knowledge all at once – quietly, efficiently, and over time. So, it is an obvious fact that reading plays a central role in the second-language learning, not only as an important skill but also as a powerful foundation that supports overall language development.

The aim and task statement. Therefore, the article sets several tasks and is aimed to investigate, analyze the importance, key characteristics, and strategies of reading comprehension.

The main material presentation. Reading also helps learners perceive grammar naturally. By repeatedly seeing sentence structures, verb tenses and word order in authentic texts, learners begin to develop an intuitive sense of what sounds correct in the language, even if they cannot always explain the grammatical rules clearly. This grammar perception through the reading is an important step toward fluency. Interestingly, this process also supports listening skills, since familiarity with written structures makes spoken language easier to follow.

In addition, reading has a strong influence on writing ability. Exposure to well-written texts helps learners understand how ideas are organized, encourages the use of more natural expressions and introduces a variety of sentence structures and styles. Many successful second-language writers improve their writing primarily through extensive reading rather than through writing practice alone.

Taking into account theoretical reflection on reading by William Grabe who reminds us of the unusual human achievement reading represents: “We were never born to read ... and with this invention ... we rearranged the very organization of our brain” [7]. The author of the “Reading in a second Language: Moving from Theory to Practice” stresses on how reading fundamentally reshapes cognition – a process vital for learners of any language. He also says that reading regularly trains the brain to recognize groups of words as meaningful units instead of processing language word by word. This reduces the need for constant translation and allows meaning to emerge more automatically.

Another important contribution of reading is cultural understanding. As every language is closely connected to culture, reading exposes learners to social norms, values, humor, idiomatic expressions and common references. This cultural knowledge helps learners communicate in ways that sound more natural and less artificial. Reading and learning a language are deeply connected because reading expands not only vocabulary, grammar but also ways of thinking in the language studied as a cultural identity.

Reading can be highly beneficial for second-language learning when it is done purposefully and with the right approach. One important rule is to choose texts that are appropriate to the learner’s level. Materials that are too difficult can cause frustration and slow progress, while texts that are too easy may not provide enough challenge to promote learning. Ideally, learners should understand most of the text while still encountering a small number of new words or structures that push their development forward.

Another key principle is to read regularly and consistently. Short, frequent reading sessions are generally more effective than long, irregular ones because repeated exposure helps the brain absorb vocabulary, grammar, and patterns naturally over time. Consistency also builds reading fluency and reduces dependence on translation.

It is also important to focus on meaning first rather than stopping to analyze every unfamiliar word. When learners interrupt reading too often to check the dictionary, comprehension and enjoyment suffer. A better strategy is to continue reading, use context to guess meaning, and only look up words that are essential for understanding or that appear repeatedly. This helps develop tolerance for ambiguity, which is an essential skill in language learning.

Active engagement with the text further increases the benefits of reading. Noticing useful expressions, sentence structures, or collocations help mentally connect them to prior knowledge. Some learners may

briefly note down new words or phrases after reading, but this should support comprehension rather than interrupt it.

Variety in reading materials also matters. Reading different types of texts such as stories, articles, dialogues, or academic texts exposes learners to multiple registers and styles of language. This broadens vocabulary and prepares learners to understand and use the language in different real-life situations.

The reading test consists of three to five academic passages, each followed by comprehension questions designed to measure the ability to understand and analyze the meaning of the texts. The question formats are similar to those used in the computer-based TOEFL test, with the addition of new question types. These new tasks require test takers to demonstrate what they have learned from the readings, either by completing a table or writing a narrative summary, as well as selecting the correct paraphrase of a passage. The test also includes new features that make the experience more user-friendly, such as an integrated glossary and a review option.

Reading Section is the initial step in TOEFL exam. The reading extracts are the university-level textbooks representing different topics and material for the Reading TOEFL section. Practicing reading college classes text books results in acquiring critical reading skills. Training with the reading tasks samples helps the exam holder to prepare well for the exam and during exam familiar types of tasks.

It is good to make a habit of reading some pages daily. "Where there is little reading there will be little language learning. ... the student who wants to learn English will have to read himself into a knowledge of it unless he can move into an English environment" [8]. After reading a few passages it is good to stop and think on what they were about.

If the exam holder comes across any unfamiliar word, it is necessary to try guessing otherwise finding them up in the dictionary. Nevertheless, it is not needed to enlarge the vocabulary of terminology in different fields or subjects because a learner may not often see this word again, so it just enough to try to guess the meaning.

A very important part of the knowledge of English is strong vocabulary. The richer the vocabulary is the better the comprehensive skills are. And, "in fact the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension is well established in the reading literature" [9]. The level of words and phrases which were managed to be obtained before the exam will help to understand the text in a proper way and to answer questions correctly, moreover there occa-

sionally direct questions on specific word meanings. One of the greatest benefits of reading is vocabulary growth. Through reading, learners encounter words in meaningful contexts rather than in isolated lists, which helps them understand how words are actually used, recognize common word combinations. A wide range of words and phrases which were learnt before the exam will help to express thoughts and ideas in a proper way. Undoubtedly that a very important part of the knowledge of English is strong vocabulary. The richer the vocabulary is the better the comprehensive skills are. The level of words and phrases which were managed to be obtained before the exam will help to understand the text in a proper way and to answer questions correctly, moreover there occasionally direct questions on specific word meanings.

This is the first section of the exam and its duration is 60-80 minutes. Three or four passages for reading contain 700 and more words. Then 12-14 questions follow. Time and length of this part depend on whether reading section or listening section include some un-scored experimental questions but the exam taker does not know which questions are graded and which are not so they need not worry of it. There will be three types of questions to the passages in the TOEFL exam: "Standard Multiple Choice", "Inserting a Sentence", "Reading to Learn".

The most common question type you'll find here is "Standard Multiple Choice". For every question there are four answer choices, only one of which is correct. You'll have to choose the correct one. These types of questions are very common. These questions may ask the exam holder about the passage as a whole, specific sentences or phrases in the passage, or the meaning of a particular word in a sentence. If you find a seemingly right answer at once not reading all the list of options proposed it may be wrong in the choice. It is useful to read and analyze all the options for making sure the best answer has been chosen, because there will be some answers which sound quite all right, but in fact they are not.

Each correct answer is always supported by fact or evidence in the passage though it may be not that direct it may be disguised but making logical assumptions it may be found. So, it is better to look through the text again for the correct answer.

"Inserting a Sentence" is another type of reading task. The new sentence forms the task should be put in the paragraph from the passage and four different places will be proposed and you need to choose the best one where the sentence should be fitted.

This type of task is somewhat tricky so you need to try all the possible variants and reread the passage several times with different variants of inserted sen-

tence and to decide what is the best one. So, considering each inserted sentence location thoroughly, you will increase the chance of answering correctly. Mind that the correct answer will preserve the meaning of the abstract so this may help in selecting the correct placement.

“Reading to Learn” task in TOEFL reading section is less common as compared to other tasks. Though it is rather important as unlikely to the tasks mentioned above which are worth one point, “Reading to Learn” task is worth two to three points. Your task will be to arrange the main parts of the passage in a chart or in a summary. There will be one of these questions for each passage. So, to avoid some confusion it is better to practice such type of task in advance while the learner is preparing for exam. It is necessary to double-check the answers to make sure it is logical and only after that move further and it is needed reread the passage again.

It is good to decide beforehand if it is appropriate to take some notes on Reading section as it may help to memorize the main issues or if the idea is not suitable because it will only distract from performing the task. It depends on the personal abilities and skills, so it is needed just to choose what is better to succeed well. Thus, the exam holders need their own strategy for carrying out the task.

The other important strategic approach is the way you work with the text and the questions. Some people prefer to start with getting acquainted with questions and afterwards reading the text and that gives them the chance to concentrate on main points while others decide to read the passage first as they regard that reading the questions at first only wastes their time, so answering question they may want to look some passages of the text again.

It is better to keep the time if to spend equal spells of time on each passage because there will be 20 minutes only, not much time so it is needed to be aware of time during the exam. It is good to spend about five minutes reading each passage and one minute answering each question.

The exam holders may get stuck on one question looking through the passages for some clues they could have missed and therefore losing much time.

It may cause the worse overall score so it is better to skip it for some time and to return to it a little bit later.

This section is the first and it is good to start the exam in a high level of performance so many exam takers regard TOEFL Reading section as very challenging as it is necessary to read, comprehend and work on a lot of material in rather short time. But good preparation in advance should surely give its great help in carrying out the tasks.

In Conclusion it should be mentioned that the article is focused on the relevance of TOEFL exam preparation, specifically on its Reading Section, as it represents an important step for young language learners toward participation in global education. By enrolling in an international study program, students fully immerse themselves in the host country’s education system, gaining authentic experience and deeper understanding of its people, traditions, and culture.

To sum up it may be noted that reading provides a form of input that learners can control. Unlike listening, reading allows learners to slow down, reread difficult passages, look up unfamiliar words and pay close attention to details. This level of control makes reading especially effective for learners at beginner and intermediate levels, giving them the space, they need to process and understand the language deeply. As learners read more, their overall comprehension and fluency also improve. Reading also builds confidence and independence. It allows learners to progress at their own pace, choose topics that interest them and continue learning outside the classroom without constant guidance from a teacher. This sense of autonomy plays a major role in maintaining motivation over time.

Finally, reading should be enjoyable and meaningful. When learners choose topics, they are genuinely interested in, motivation increases and reading becomes a habit rather than a task. Enjoyment leads to more reading and more reading leads to stronger language skills. When these principles are followed, reading becomes one of the most effective and sustainable tools for second-language learning. The ability to transcend linguistic barriers has become imperative for young professionals across various fields in the context of globalization.

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