TEACHING READING ONLINE BY USING READTHEORY.ORG

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ABSTRACT

Reading is one of the receptive skills that helps to improve receptive and productive skills. Some of the benefits of reading are reading and writing improvement, vocabulary and motivation growth, learner autonomy development, etc. This proposal aims to encourage institutions to implement reading teaching by using readtheory.org to ease teachers' jobs. The idea is that teachers spend more time teaching productive skills in the classroom since they are the most difficult, but still possible. However, it is challenging to teach and evaluate them online. Readtheory is a k12 program that starts with a pretest activity, the test consists of eight questions that are adjusted automatically as learners answer them. Levels increase if they answer questions correctly and decrease if they are wrong, placing students in the right level. After the test, students start the reading program. The program sets passages at the level they were placed. If students were lucky enough at the pretest, they can increase or decrease their level as data is collected. The best feature of this program is the metric it generates; you can see graphics such as pretest level vs program level, number of quizzes taken, level of quizzes taken, lexile level, etc. Teachers spend a lot of time teaching and evaluating receptive skills, skills that can be taught using online programs and apps whilst release time for teaching productive skills in the classroom. After several years of teaching using the program, the main characteristics are shown in order to improve teaching.

RESUMEN

La lectura es una de las destrezas receptivas que ayuda a mejorar tanto las destrezas productivas como las receptivas en sí. Entre los beneficios de leer podemos mencionar la mejora en lectura y escritura, incremento de vocabulario y motivación, desarrollo del aprendizaje autónomo, etc. Esta propuesta tiene como objetivo promover la implementación de la enseñanza de lectura por medio de la página web readtheory.org en las instituciones para simplificar el trabajo de los docentes. La idea es que los docentes dediquen más tiempo enseñando las destrezas productivas en el aula ya que estas son las más difíciles. Sin embargo, es más exigente enseñarlas y evaluarlas en línea. Readtheory es un programa K12 que inicia con una evaluación de diagnóstico, la evaluación consiste de ocho preguntas que se ajustan automáticamente a medida que los estudiantes las responden. Los niveles aumentan si responden correctamente y reducen en caso contrario, ubicando a los estudiantes siempre en el nivel correcto. Después del test, los estudiantes empiezan el programa como tal. El programa les muestra lecturas de acuerdo al diagnóstico. Si los estudiantes fueron afortunados al momento de realizar el diagnóstico, su nivel puede aumentar o disminuir a medida que se cuenta con más información. La mejor característica de este programa es la métrica que genera; se pueden observar gráficos como: nivel de diagnóstico versus nivel real, numero de lecturas realizadas, grado de lecturas y grado de dificultad, etc. Los docentes pasan mucho tiempo enseñando destrezas receptivas, destrezas que pueden ser enseñadas utilizando programas y aplicaciones en línea mientras liberan tiempo para la enseñanza de las destrezas productivas en el aula de clases. Después de varios años utilizando el programa, las principales características se muestran para mejorar la enseñanza.

Palabras clave: Comprensión lectora, enseñanza en línea, destrezas receptivas, lectura en línea.

INTRODUCTION

English learning is an issue around the world. The English Proficiency Index EPI 2019 carried out by Education first EF, ranged 54 out of 100 countries evaluated between low and very low proficiency. According to the results, Latin America showed low proficiency (50.34), Argentina achieved the best score in the region (58.38), whilst Ecuador the lowest (46.57). Bolivia improved the most (+2.77) whilst Dominican Republic showed the largest decline (-2.39).

Ecuador and Venezuela are the only two countries in Latin America that scored very low. "Despite laws that make English a required subject in most Latin American countries, access to English classes remains uneven. In Ecuador in 2014, that figure was less than 7%. Disparities in access to English education are particularly acute between rural and urban areas, and between private and public schools. In some countries, the demand for English in the workplace is so high, and the school provision so poor, that huge numbers of professionals invest in English lessons." (EF, 2019).

One of the problems institutions face in Ecuador is certified teachers, teachers' training is crucial for improving learners' achievement, "It is important that teachers know how to improve their pedagogy not only by implementing tools and strategies to address the subject matter, but also using data they themselves gather to draw conclusions that will lead them to develop new instructional approaches." (Burgin, 2017)

On the other hand, learners find little English support outside the classroom, they do not speak English at home, there are very few English radio or TV stations, newspapers. Therefore, the main support is in the classroom, which gives teachers a lot of responsibility. (BEKES, 2016)

The ESPAM University has been collaborating with EF since 2018, results not yet published were disappointing. Most of the students, no matter the level scored A1 according the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Reading comprehension is one of the most important elements in English language learning. "Learners who engage with extensive reading tend to be more motivated students, and this may in part be because extensive reading promotes learner autonomy, which itself can have a powerful impact on motivation." Deci & Ryan, 1985 quoted by (Cambridge University Press, 2018)

Learners become good readers through reading. The more language students read the better readers they become. An integral part of it is learning new vocabulary. (Donaghy, 2016). Learners who read more will not only become better and more confident readers, but they will also improve their reading, writing, listening and speaking abilities and their vocabularies will get richer. (Bamford, 2004).

Although most teachers claim to use the communicative approach, they still spend more time teaching grammar, reading, and listening than speaking and writing. Receptive skills and grammar can be taught online with a little of effort from teachers, releasing a considerable amount of time for teaching productive skills in the classroom. "Hybrid online reading enhances learners' various reaction patterns and preferences in their hypermedia learning atmosphere" (Park, 2011)

Read Theory is a powerful educational tool that offers online reading activities for all ages and ability levels. Our custom web application adapts to students' individual ability levels and presents them with thousands of skill building exercises that suit their needs. (Readtheory.org, N/D)

This proposal aims to encourage institutions to implement the use of readtheory by improving both teaching and learning, Teachers will use their classroom time more efficiently and learners will increase their reading comprehension skill.

METHODOLOGY

The first step in order to achieve the goal is to standardize the policies in the institutions, the use of readtheory must be required from first to last level. Another aspect to take into consideration is the evaluation process; all teachers must evaluate the use of the program the same way to create a fair atmosphere. Some of the suggested steps are:

1. Set the rules from day one.
2. Include a week in the schedule to familiarize students with the program.
3. Encourage learners to read a passage a day even on weekends, this boosts learner autonomy and creates a reading habit.
4. Stimulate your students to write down new words, look for definitions, and practice the pronunciation of new vocabulary.
5. Explain the students the main features of the program so they are aware of their progress.
6. Make sure students understand that you will evaluate them at the end of the program with a test composed of two passages of the same level of difficulty they are enrolled.
7. Increase a level of difficulty every next level.

ReadTheory's Main features

1000s of exercises & worksheets

Our ever-growing database of ever-green passages fits every level of reading and guarantees your students will never get bored. ReadTheory has enough texts for year-round reading comprehension practice, including home practice.

Tracking & analysis

Track your students' progress throughout the year with easy-to-understand reports.
Easily identify struggling students and high-performers.
Quickly analyze performance on the individual level and class level.

Trustworthy

All of our texts are accurately aligned to grade-level standards and a Lexile measure is provided for each, so you can trust your students' performance metrics and reading level.

Captivating content

Our content fits every culture and every country and is one of the main reasons why students around the world love using ReadTheory.

Adaptive

ReadTheory's reading comprehension practice is adaptive and caters to the individual's needs. Our solution automatically recognizes the student's reading level and matches them with the appropriate text and questions.

RESULTS

It is expected to increase reading comprehension at least one level per module, Therefore; students will reach at least eighth grade (from the K12 program) at the end of the eight required levels.
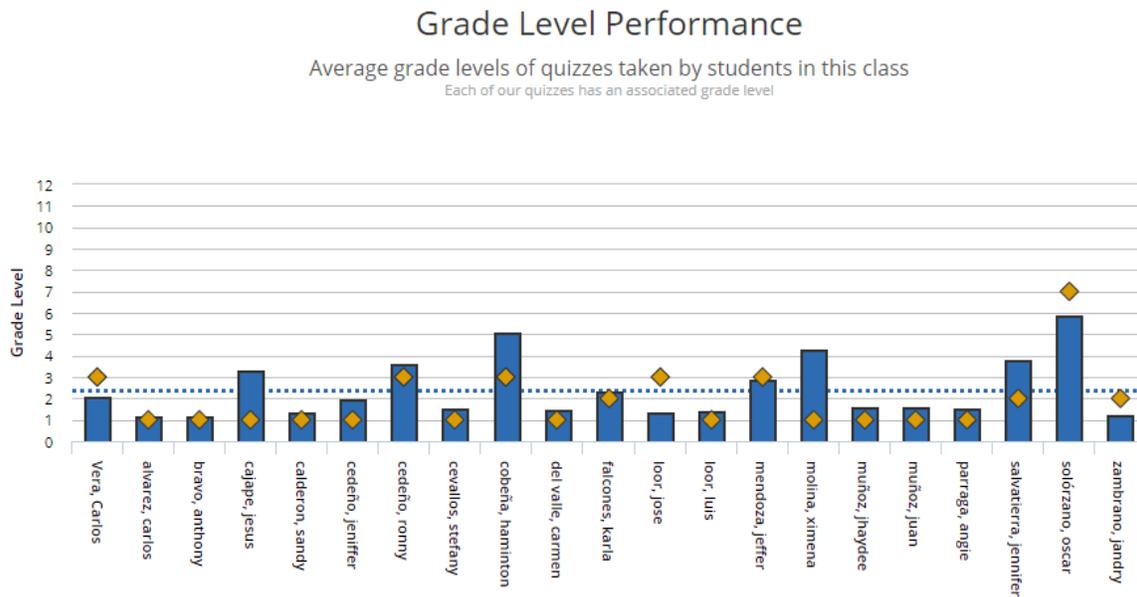
Graphic 1. Progress report from course 103C39V

Critical statistics and graphs for every quiz completed since inception. Click or hover for details.

432	8576KP	1.90G/329L	2.41G/403L
Quizzes Completed	Knowledge Points	Class Pretest Average (Grade/Lexile)	Class Program Average (Grade/Lexile)

Above results from a pilot program are shown, students completed 432 passages, they got 8576 knowledge points which are earned by answering questions correctly and scoring perfect in passages. Students started in grade 1.9 and ended in grade 2.41. Finally, the difficulty of the quizzes at the beginning was 329 Lexile and at the end of the course, it was 403L.

Graphic 2. Grade level performance

Grade Level Performance
Average grade levels of quizzes taken by students in this class
Each of our quizzes has an associated grade level

Graphic 2 shows every student's performance, Diamonds show the pretest level and the blue bars show students' program performance. Notice that some students started higher and then their level decreased. It was because they were lucky at the moment of the pretest but the program automatically place them in the right level.

Although just first level was required in this example, students performed better than expected, both on the pretest and on the program.

CONCLUSION

Despite statistical data is needed in order to draw a conclusion the pilot program is encouraging. Students get engaged from the first moment they start using the program. They usually practice more than teachers require, the metrica is easy to understand for both teachers and students, students develop autonomy, and finally and maybe the most important part is that teachers have more time to develop productive skills in the classroom.

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