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## **TASK ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE READING ALoud IN ENGLISH IN STUDENTS FROM 8TH GRADE, SAN PABLO, HEREDIA**

**ACTIVIDADES BASADAS EN TAREAS PARA POTENCIAR LA  
LECTURA EN VOZ ALTA EN INGLÉS EN ESTUDIANTES DE  
OCTAVO GRADO DE COLEGIO. 2023**

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## Task Activities to Enhance Reading Aloud in English in Students From 8th Grade, San Pablo, Heredia

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### ABSTRACT

This research focuses on eight grade students from the Mario Vindas high school, a public high from the Ministry of Education in Costa Rica. The research will explore some task-based activities for students that enhance the reading aloud participation in the English class and therefore, the development of the reading skill. Also, the research discusses the reasons behind the lack of interest in students when participating in reading aloud activities.

**Key words:** EFL, task-based, activities, reading, aloud

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## **Actividades Basadas en Tareas para Potenciar la Lectura en Voz Alta en Inglés en Estudiantes de Octavo Grado de Colegio. 2023**

### **RESUMEN**

Esta investigación se centra en estudiantes de octavo grado del colegio Mario Vindas, Liceo público del Ministerio de Educación de Costa Rica. La investigación explorará algunas actividades basadas en tareas para los estudiantes potencien la participación de la lectura en voz alta en la clase de inglés y, por lo tanto, el desarrollo de la habilidad de lectura. Además, la investigación discute las razones detrás de la falta de interés de los estudiantes al participar en actividades de lectura en voz alta.

**Palabras clave:** EFL, basado en tareas, actividades, lectura, en voz alta

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## INTRODUCTION

The endeavor to acquire proficiency in a new language is a multifaceted and intellectually demanding pursuit, characterized by the nuanced interplay of linguistic structures, cultural contexts, and cognitive processes. In language acquisition, the act of reading emerges as a linchpin, a pivotal activity that underscores the multifarious dimensions of linguistic competence and cultural perception. This academic exploration embarks on a comprehensive examination of the profound significance of reading within the framework of acquiring a new language, endeavoring to elucidate the cognitive, linguistic, and socio-cultural mechanisms by which reading exerts its transformative influence. In fact, it can be significant to explore the reasons why teenage students do not like reading; especially reading aloud. According to Lee (2023): “Many students dislike reading aloud because they lack confidence in their abilities, but it’s never too late to improve fluency.” Therefore, there are reasons why students do not do this too often may vary or be similar between students.

In the realm of language acquisition, reading stands as a bridge between the theoretical constructs of language, as expounded in grammar textbooks, and the living, dynamic communication that transpires in real-world contexts. It is a mechanism through which learners encounter vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and syntactic structures in their natural habitat the written word. According to Dong (2019): “Reading, even at a slow pace exposes students to more sentences, grammar, and new vocabulary per minute than the average, short class, TV show, or song.” Consequently, this engagement with written language contributes significantly to the enrichment of one's lexicon, offering exposure to a broader spectrum of vocabulary, collocations, and registers than traditional classroom settings might provide. Furthermore, the act of reading in a foreign language demands the development of essential skills such as inference-making, context extraction, and comprehension. These cognitive processes are instrumental not only in interpreting the immediate textual content but also in developing the broader capacity for critical thinking and analytical reasoning.

As people embark on this scholarly inquiry, it becomes evident that reading is not merely a complementary skill but an integral and transformative facet of language acquisition. According to Bostock (2023), “Reading English is an important part of language learning because it helps you develop other related skills like grammar, vocabulary, and writing. Reading allows language learners to explore



topics that they love and stories that engage them.” Its pivotal role is to overlook an effective instrument that facilitates linguistic proficiency, nurtures cognitive dexterity, and cultivates intercultural understanding. This comprehensive exploration pretends to underscore the imperative nature of reading in class in the pursuit of linguistic improvement and the learning and development of the target language.

### **Justification**

This research aims to address a crucial aspect of language development among 8th-grade students in San Pablo, Heredia. This research is pivotal because reading aloud is something many students do not usually develop or like; therefore, it is important to focus on this since it is a fundamental skill in language acquisition and proficiency, especially in the context of learning a second language or a foreign language like English. As the global importance of English proficiency increases, empowering students with effective reading skills becomes crucial. Focusing on 8th-grade students is important as they are at a critical stage in their language development. The research seeks to introduce and explore task-based activities that may offer innovative and engaging methods for enhancing reading aloud. This could contribute significantly to the pedagogical strategies used by teachers in the region and beyond, allowing for a more effective and enjoyable learning experience. Improving reading aloud skills could potentially lead to enhanced academic performance, comprehension, and communication abilities among the students. This improvement can have a positive impact on their overall educational experience. In conclusion, this research title signifies a well-targeted, contextually relevant, and potentially impactful study. Its outcomes have the potential to not only benefit the students in San Pablo, Heredia, but also contribute to the broader discourse on language learning strategies and methodologies, offering valuable insights for educators worldwide.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Historical Context**

##### **Background of the organization or community.**

According to the webpage [bibliomavisa.blogspot](http://bibliomavisa.blogspot) (n.d), the idea to create a secondary school in San Pablo de Heredia originated in 1971, led by Lic. Edwin León Villalobos. Municipal discussions and collaborations facilitated the acquisition of land and the formation of the school. With the help of key



figures like Edwin León Villalobos and Mario Vindas Salazar, the school opened in 1972, initially functioning alongside an existing school.

Recognizing the need for separate facilities due to the growing student population, efforts began in 1973 to acquire land for a new building. By 1982, the school moved to a new location, inaugurating its premises with a different name to honor the founding director, Mario Vindas Salazar, after his passing in 1984.

Today Mario Vindas high school offers media and diversified education in a daily modality. There are around nine hundred students enrolled from 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 11<sup>th</sup> grade. According to Campos (2012) its mission is to orient and create integral humans with values and in a good environment that provides students opportunities of inclusion where they can express and be themselves. Its vision is to be a regional and nationally prestigious institution that provides students with new technologies and tools to develop in a very demanding world.

### **Definition of reading and reading-aloud**

Based on the Cambridge dictionary, reading refers to: “the action or skill of reading written or printed matter silently or aloud.” On the other hand, according to Leipzig (n.d), reading in education is defined as: “Reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation.”

Reading aloud is defined according to the Collins as “When you say something, read, or laugh aloud, you speak or laugh so that other people can hear you.” For the purpose of this research, the researcher will focus on activities that help students lose the fear of r

Therefore, reading and reading aloud are distinct activities that engage different aspects of language processing. When one reads silently, the focus is on internalizing and comprehending the content through visual recognition of words and their meanings. In this way, readers take the test in a more private and introspective experience, enabling the reader to read at their own pace. On the other hand, reading aloud involves the vocalization of written words, bringing an auditory dimension to the process. This activity requires the reader to not only recognize the words but also articulate them, emphasizing pronunciation and intonation. Reading aloud promotes a more communal experience, as it allows for the shared enjoyment of literature and facilitates the communication of ideas. While both forms of



reading contribute to literacy skills, they offer unique benefits and cater to different preferences in learning and communication styles reading aloud in the English class.

### **Reading aloud comprehension.**

Reading aloud implies more than just saying the words aloud, it requires comprehension on what is being read. Developing comprehension in students should then be very important when developing reading activities in class. As stated by Zimmerman and Hutchins (2003. Pag.1): “Reading comprehension is the ability to read text, process it and understand its meaning.” Therefore, reading aloud will also bring a benefit to students regarding understanding what they read or what others read.

Also, according to Gold & Gibson (n.d) “Reading aloud demonstrates the relationship between the printed word and meaning – children understand that print tells a story or conveys information – and invites the listener into a conversation with the author.”

### **Factors that affect the participation in reading aloud activities**

Reading aloud may be an activity many students do not like or are afraid of doing in class. According to Lee (2023): “Many students dislike reading aloud because they lack confidence in their abilities, but it’s never too late to improve fluency. There are some common factors that affect the participation of students in reading aloud activities. Some of these factors are:

Shame: based on Lee, “Reading-related shame is omnipresent in the classroom. Students feel it as they laboriously read, and teachers feel it when we hear them read. Therefore, students don’t read aloud anymore.” Feeling embarrassed can be a situation teachers may perceive in students.

Motivation. As stated by Silva (2020): “Motivation is the state that can maintain students’ attention and behavior as well as provides with more energy to needed to lead tasks to completion.” If teachers do not motivate students to participate, they will not feel like this is good for them; therefore, motivation is a very important aspect in students ‘participation in class.

Fluency. If students do not practice reading too often, they may present some problems with fluency. According to Laberge and Samuel (1974): “the lack of reading fluency comes from not being able to decode words properly.”



## **Task based approach**

The task-based approach to learning is a powerful educational strategy that emphasizes practical application over rote memorization. As John Dewey wisely stated, “Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.” This mindset perfectly complements the task-based method, wherein learners participate actively in practical, real-world activities to cultivate a more profound grasp of concepts and skills. Engaging in tasks that replicate genuine scenarios allows individuals not only to gain knowledge but also to cultivate crucial critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary for success in diverse aspects of life. Embracing the task-based approach signifies adopting a comprehensive and dynamic educational approach that readies individuals not only for exams but also for the various challenges and opportunities that life may bring. According to Hong-qin (2007) “In a task-based teaching class, the teacher design tasks from different angles and different forms, which evoke students’ interest, and organize lessons in such a way that students can carry out the reading tasks with quality and efficiency.”

In this research, the reading tasks are considered as classwork activities that give students autonomy and the opportunity to practice the target language in a natural and in a meaningful way. “Task is in an activity that engages students, involves the use of target language communicatively which reflects to real-world activity” (Sukma, et.al.,2018). The students will be exposed to activities that reinforce the reading aloud skill and the development of the language.

### **Activities to enhance reading aloud.**

Reading is a skill difficult to practice because teachers need to be very careful in the selection of activities for the students. According to Sloan (n.d. parr. 3), some activities students can develop in class are:

- Taking turns. Asking students not to read a long or a whole text is important. Ask students to just a short sentence at a time.
- Reading and acting. One student reads aloud and another acts as conductor.
- Roleplay the reading. Students act as the person in the reading or the situation given.
- Writing on the board or clap out. Students try to read a phrase correctly and use claps to understand the pronunciation and written form.





- Students engage in a competition where they demonstrate their ability to read a passage aloud.
- Students take turns reading aloud while embodying various adverbs suggested by their peers, like nervously, sadly, angrily, and more.

These activities can be implemented in any moment of the English class and with any topic. The most important thing here is to know the population and the type of activities that are more suitable for them. By providing these activities, teachers can make sure students will learn in a meaningful way and have fun at the same time.

### **Motivation when reading aloud**

Motivation plays a pivotal role in the development of reading aloud, serving as the driving force that propels individuals to engage with written material in a vocal and expressive manner. Reading aloud requires a consistent and constant dose of motivation. As Hawthorne (2021) says, “Motivated students are much more likely to achieve their potential and find success.” When individuals are motivated, whether by a genuine interest in the content, a desire for self-improvement, or the joy of sharing a story, their enthusiasm becomes a catalyst for effective oral communication. Motivation transforms the reading process into an animated and dynamic experience, fostering not only improved pronunciation and fluency but also a deeper connection with the material.

### **Benefits of reading aloud**

According to Duncan (2022) there are some benefits of reading aloud that are:

1. Children's ability to comprehend spoken language often surpasses their reading comprehension. Reading aloud facilitates access to complex ideas, introduces new vocabulary, and exposes them to language patterns not commonly found in everyday speech. This, in turn, aids in their independent reading by enhancing their understanding of book structures. Read-alouds also grant children access to information and experiences, even if they haven't mastered all written words. Vooks provides an additional advantage by offering read-along text, bridging the gap between the written and spoken word.
2. Reading aloud ensures that captivating books are accessible to readers of all ages, contributing to their development as proficient readers. Listening to a skilled reading of a captivating book, whether young or old, fosters a lifelong appreciation for literature.



3. Exposure to a diverse range of stories and books allows children to identify with various characters, cultures, communities, and issues depicted in literature. Books become a mirror reflecting both shared and unique fears, interests, and concerns. Children connect real-life experiences to understand books, and books, in turn, help them comprehend real life. Choosing books with rich language, meaningful plots, compelling characters, and engaging illustrations encourages children to connect unfamiliar texts with their existing knowledge.

4. Modeling serves as a catalyst for children to develop the habits and strategies employed by proficient readers. Observing and imitating fluent readers' thought processes and problem-solving techniques during reading make the seemingly invisible act of reading visible.

5. Reading aloud contributes to vocabulary development. The quantity of words children hear during their preschool years predicts their understanding and quick acquisition of new words in kindergarten. This trend continues through the third grade, where early language competence correlates with language and reading comprehension. Children exposed to conversation and read-aloud, rich in sophisticated words and sentence structures, tend to have larger vocabulary, providing them an advantage in the classroom.

6. Reading aloud nurtures social and emotional growth. Storytime provides a constructive approach to discussing challenging topics, offering a platform to explore characters' choices rather than lecturing about real-life experiences.

## **METHODOLOGICAL**

The purpose of this research is to implement task activities that will help students developing reading aloud. The micro framework focuses on applying task activities that will help students reading aloud and feeling well when doing it at Mario Vindas High school. It emphasizes a qualitative approach that studies the students' participation and reaction to several activities proposed in the English classroom. The aim is to gain in-depth insights into the phenomenon and explore the complexities involved.

### **Data Selection: Techniques and Instruments for Data Collection**

**Student's questionnaire:** The researcher may share an online questionnaire to students to know their perspective regarding the English class and the development of reading aloud tasks as part of the activities.



**Observation instrument:** The researcher may use a chart to record observations of the reaction and participation of students in the different reading aloud task activities proposed.

### **Activities to implement in the English class.**

The activities that will be implemented in the English class are the ones proposed by Sloan(n.d. parr. 3)

1. Reading and acting. One student reads aloud, and some other students act based on what they hear.
2. Taking turns to read. The teacher divides the reading in short paragraphs or phrases and give them to the students with numbers. Students read the passage they have in chronological order starting from 1.
3. Roleplay the conversation. The teacher divides the group in pairs, and they read their part meanwhile they roleplay and use the correct intonation and pronunciation.
4. Reading aloud with emotions. Students take turns reading aloud while embodying various adverbs suggested by their peers, like nervously, sadly, angrily, and more.
5. Writing on the board or clapping out. The teacher writes a text on the board and students try to read a phrase correctly and use claps to understand the pronunciation and written form.

### **Data Analysis**

The following information is taken from the analysis of the questionnaire applied to 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 8-4 and 8-6 groups, and the observations done by the researcher to the English classes. The analysis will be developed by using graphics and descriptive charts.

#### **Question 1.** Do you like the English class?

According to the information gotten, most of the students with 67,3% like the English class. Then, some of the students with a 27,3% like it somehow. Only a 5,4% of the students do not like the English class. Therefore, it is concluded that there are more students that like the English class than students that do not like it at all.

#### **Question 2.** What type of activities in the English class students like the most?

Based on the answers gotten from question 2, students like written activities the most with 30.9% compared to readings with only 14.4%. Also, oral activities are really liked by the students with 27,3%. Some students like listening activities with 16,4%. Therefore, speaking, and written activities are the ones students like the most and enjoy having in the English class.



**Question 3.** Do you like reading aloud?

Regarding question 3, most of the students that participated in the questionnaire with 44,6% do not like reading aloud. Sometimes students like reading aloud with 23,2%. On the other hand, only 17,9% of the students like to read aloud. It is evident that students have a resistance to reading aloud in class when they have to do it because they do not like it.

**Question 4.** When I read aloud, I feel...

Based on the information obtained, four, students feel ashamed when reading aloud, representing 42,9% of the answers gathered. On the contrary, only a few students with a 10,7% feel well when reading aloud in the English class. Also, some students with a high percentage in the graphic also mentioned that it is ok if they must participate in speaking aloud tasks in class. It is noticeable that most students feel ashamed of participating in reading aloud tasks and this may be a reason why they do not like to do it in class.

**Question 5. Reasons why students do not like to participate in class.**

Regarding question number 5, the most repeated reason why students do not like to participate in English activities in class is because they feel ashamed, representing 37,5%. On the other hand, a high quantity of the students that answered the questionnaire with 33, 9%, agree that they like participating in the English class. Also, some of the students with a low percentage express that it is boring for them to participate in class. Based on this information, feeling ashamed is the number one reason why students do not like to participate in the English class.

**Observations**

The following charts will summarize and bring information about the different reading tasks implemented in the English class with the purpose of developing reading aloud in students.

**Chart 1.**

Date	Task	Observation #1
October 20 <sup>th</sup>	Roleplay the reading.	The teacher chose three students to help roleplaying the reading. Three students were acting out meanwhile others were reading aloud. The focus of attention was on the ones that were acting out. The students did it great and there were no problems or interference in the activity.



According to the Cambridge dictionary, roleplaying is “the act of imitating the character and behavior of someone who is different from yourself, for example as a training exercise.” This first activity was really helpful for the students because they were practicing reading aloud in a very natural and relaxing way. According to what it was observed, the students participated actively in the activity and seemed to be enjoying the activity because they wanted to read and see their classmates doing the actions they were reading aloud. It was evident that students accomplished the reading aloud task satisfactory due to their participation.

**Chart 2.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Observation #2</b>
October 27 <sup>th</sup>	Taking turns to read.	The teacher divided the reading into sentences and gave each of the students a sentence. These sentences had numbers. Students needed to pay attention and when they listened to their number, they had to read their sentence aloud. Some students were not paying attention, so they were lost, and the teacher had to call their attention. After the activity, students completed some reading comprehension tasks.

In this activity, all students participated because they had a sentence to read. This was good because the students felt like there was no chance to say they did not want to read aloud, it was mandatory for the students to read; however, some students were not paying attention or seemed uncomfortable with the idea of reading aloud. In general, all students participated in the activity, but it was hard, and the teacher somehow had to push some students to read their parts. It can be concluded that this activity allows all students to participate in reading, but not all of them wanted to do it. Therefore, most students could accomplish the reading task in a meaningful way.

**Chart 3.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Observation</b>
November 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Roleplay the conversation.	The teacher divided the groups in pairs. Then, she gave the pairs a conversation in which the students had to read it aloud and pretend they were the persons having the conversation. In this activity all the students participated actively without inconvenience.



In this activity the teacher let the students work with the person they liked; therefore, students worked in the task very well and very comfortable. The activity accomplished its objective of letting students use the language aloud. All the students participated in the activity and had no problems developing it.

**Chart 4.**

Date	Task	Observation
November 10 <sup>th</sup>	Reading aloud with emotions.	In this class teacher brought some emojis (sadness, happiness, anger, surprised) and gave the students a short reading passage. She asked for volunteers reading the text but choosing one of the emotions on the board. The teacher asked for volunteers, but it was hard to have a student that wanted to participate. Some students volunteer but the teacher had to call the students list to do the activity. Students were having fun but the ones that were reading, seemed to be ashamed.

In this activity, most of the students seemed to feel ashamed and did not want to participate. The fact that they had to make a funny voice, made some of the students feel uncomfortable and not wanted to participate reading aloud. However, the students that were just following the reading were paying attention to what the other students were going to read with an emotion; therefore, the activity was good for reading understanding but it was very difficult to have students that wanted to read aloud.

**Chart 5.**

Date	Task	Observation
November 17 <sup>th</sup>	Writing on the board or clapping out.	The teacher projected a reading on the board and students had to listen to her reading a sentence and clapping it, and then the students had to repeat it. (Choral reading). In this activity most of the students participated without pressure.

Based on the students 'participation in the activity, it can be concluded that students had no problems developing the reading aloud task. Most students understood at first the instructions and the others did it correctly by observing their classmates. Therefore, this activity helped the students using the language and reading aloud.



## CONCLUSION

First, the objective of identifying the reasons why eighth-grade students do not like reading aloud has shed light on crucial insights. The analysis of the questionnaire and the observations during English classes have consistently revealed a predominant sentiment of reluctance and discomfort associated with the act of reading aloud. The findings indicate that a significant proportion of students express a dislike for this activity, with a primary contributing factor being the overwhelming feeling of shame. This emotional barrier poses a substantial obstacle to active participation in reading aloud tasks within the English class.

Moreover, the observations of various reading tasks underscore the multifaceted nature of the challenges students face when engaging in this activity. The discomfort associated with reading aloud seems to stem from factors such as self-consciousness, fear, and the perceived pressure of being heard by peers. Understanding these underlying reasons is crucial for educators and curriculum developers to tailor interventions that address not only the act of reading aloud but also the emotional and social aspects associated with it.

Because the students are not used to having reading aloud activities in class, the students do not feel comfortable or ready to do these activities. Therefore, the students need to be motivated and start with different activities that will mark a path to the teacher in the pursuit of developing reading aloud effectively.

To enhance the overall experience and engagement of eighth-grade students in reading aloud, it is imperative to consider strategies that alleviate feelings of shame, create a supportive and encouraging environment, and integrate diverse activities that cater to individual preferences and comfort levels. By acknowledging and addressing these underlying reasons, educators can foster a positive and inclusive learning environment that promotes the development of essential language skills, ultimately contributing to a more enjoyable and enriching English class experience for all students.

Also, regarding the exploration into effective didactic activities to encourage the development of reading skills, particularly reading aloud, in the English class, the results have provided valuable insights. The combination of questionnaire analysis and classroom observations has offered a comprehensive understanding of student preferences, challenges, and responses to various activities.



From these findings, several key conclusions can be drawn to guide the design and implementation of didactic activities aimed at fostering reading proficiency and confidence: look for tasks that can be accomplished, try to use different activities in class, look for collaborative reading tasks, examine the type of activities students like, and search for activities that can be suitable for the target population and the accomplishment of the learning objectives.

Next, in implementing reading tasks strategies to benefit students in developing reading aloud skills, it is crucial to consider a multifaceted approach that addresses both the technical aspects of reading and the emotional barriers associated with reading aloud. From this objective it was concluded that most of the reading tasks applied by the researcher were effective; students lost the fear of reading aloud and participation to the activities was very good. By combining different strategies or tasks, educators can create a supportive and dynamic learning environment that encourages students to develop their reading aloud skills with confidence and enthusiasm.

It was evident due to the participation of the students and the observations made by the researcher that from the five reading aloud tasks that were implemented, the collaborative tasks were better to encourage the participation of the students. According to what was observed, the most effective and enjoyable activities were: reading and acting, and role play the conversation. The reasons may be associated with feeling comfortable and not so exposed in the activity. On the other hand, the activities that caused more troubles or misunderstandings when developing were taking turns to read and reading with emotions. These two activities were more difficult to implement because of the lack of attention from the students and the fear of being heard and be exposed.

In evaluating the effectiveness of reading aloud activities, the active engagement of students is a pivotal indicator. Notably, tasks that incorporated roleplaying in a natural and relaxed setting garnered positive responses, showcasing the importance of interactive elements in fostering engagement. However, the implementation of mandatory participation through assigned sentences revealed challenges, with some students displaying discomfort or inattention. This underscores the significance of not only mandating participation but also creating a supportive and encouraging environment that motivates students to actively embrace reading aloud tasks.



The social dynamics of pair work emerged as a key factor influencing participation, as activities that allowed students to collaborate with a partner of their choice resulted in effective and comfortable engagement. On the contrary, tasks introducing novelty, such as using funny voices, presented challenges, with some students feeling uncomfortable. Striking a balance between creativity and student comfort is crucial for designing activities that are both engaging and conducive to successful reading aloud experiences. Moreover, the positive impact of activities simulating real-life contexts, like reader's theater, highlights the potential for incorporating performative elements to make reading tasks more enjoyable and relevant.

Structured activities with clear instructions were found to contribute significantly to successful participation. Students were more likely to engage when task requirements were well-defined, emphasizing the importance of clarity in task design. The level of resistance varied among students during activities challenging their comfort zones, emphasizing the need for flexible task designs that accommodate diverse learning styles. Overall, the effectiveness of reading aloud tasks was closely tied to the creation of a supportive class atmosphere, underlining the critical role of the classroom environment in task success. Continuous observation and adjustments based on student responses are essential for refining approaches and ensuring sustained engagement in reading tasks.

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