DIFFERENT COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT'S READING COMPREHENSION

Dr. Anjali Hans

Assistant Professor in English, University of Dammam
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Mr. Emmanuel Hans

Research Scholar, Singhania University
Rajasthan, India

ABSTRACT: *Comprehension is the ultimate goal of all reading; that is, the ability to understand a text underlies all reading tasks. Thus, main-idea comprehension should be at the core of all reading instruction. In most classes, comprehension is tested as the class reviews post-reading comprehension questions. Instead of testing comprehension, we can help our students by teaching comprehension. Simply put, reading comprehension is the act of understanding what you are reading. While the definition can be simply stated the act is not simple to teach, learn or practice. Reading comprehension is an intentional, active, interactive process that occurs before, during and after a person reads a particular piece of writing. Reading comprehension is one of the pillars of the act of reading. The use of effective comprehension strategies that provide specific instructions for developing and retaining comprehension skills, with intermittent feedback, has been found to improve reading comprehension across all ages.*

KEYWORDS: Comprehension, Reading, Teaching, Interactive, Instructions, Feedback

INTRODUCTION

Comprehension skills practice and discussion

The overarching goal of reading, of course, is comprehension. Yet comprehension is not achieved easily. It requires a reasonable knowledge of grammar, the ability to identify main ideas, an awareness of discourse structure (i.e., how textual information organized and the signals that provide cues to that organization), and the use of multiple strategies to achieve comprehension goals (Hedgcock and Ferris 2009; Hudson 2007; Pressley 2006). Teaching students how to comprehend texts and discussions of how comprehension is achieved are important elements of a wide-ranging reading curriculum. Comprehension is the ultimate goal of all reading; that is, the ability to understand a text underlies all reading tasks. Thus, main-idea comprehension should be at the core of all reading instruction (Grabe and Stoller 2013). In most classes, comprehension is tested as the class reviews post-reading comprehension questions. Instead of testing comprehension, we can help our students by teaching comprehension. Below are a few ideas that do not require more than ten minutes of class. Below are a few ideas that do not require more than ten minutes of a class.

1. -Ask students to anticipate, predict, confirm, or modify their predictions, and summarize. Following this will help students relate their background knowledge to the text and determine their goals for reading, and engage in a series of prediction and/ or summarizing tasks at set, predetermined pauses.

2.- Ask how, when, and why questions about reading-strategy use. Bring combinations of the following reading strategies to students' conscious attention:

   - Preview and form questions about the text.

   -Answer questions while reading.

   -Identify difficulties encountered in the text.

   -Take steps, such as reading, to repair faulty comprehension.

   -Judge how well goals are met.

   -Take notes, underline, or highlight main ideas and summarize using notes.

   Encourage strategy practice while students are reading for authentic purposes. As a class talk about how, when, and why strategy sets are used.

3.- Model strategy use. Consider reading a text segment aloud to students while incorporating the verbalization of strategies. For example, you might comment on reading goals.

4.- Ask students to follow up initial post reading question responses with further elaboration. This can be done by asking students to defend their answers, explain why an answer is appropriate, or point out where the text supports their answers.

5.- Assign summary tasks. With more demanding text, ask students to summarize what they have read. Such tasks provide students with practice in identifying main ideas, articulate those ideas, and establishing links across main ideas and supporting details.

6.- Use graphic organizers. Work with students to fill in simple diagrams on the board with key words and phrases to indicate the discourse organization of a text paragraph or section. Texts or portions of texts that are organized around problem-solution, comparison-contrast. Cause-effect, or timeline/ sequence frameworks lend themselves well to such tasks. Guide students in a quick discussion of their completed graphic organizers.

7.- Give students a list of transition words and phrases that they have encountered and ask them to cluster into similar groups. For intermediate-level students, provide a set of transition word categories followed by a list of transition words and phrases. The task involves categorizing the transition words into appropriate groups. Follow this activity ask students why they categorized the words as they did. For more advanced students, do not provide the category names. Rather, ask students to generate a name for each category as they create. Point out some words could be placed in more than one category. The teacher and students can create a class chart and add transition words as they are encountered.

Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension skills separates the "passive" unskilled reader from the "active" readers. Skilled readers don't just read, they interact with the text. To help a beginning reader understand this concept, you might make them privy to the dialogue readers have with themselves while reading.

Skilled readers, for instance**:**

- Predict what will happen next in a story using clues presented in text
- Create questions about the main idea, message, or plot of the text
- Monitor understanding of the sequence, context, or characters
- Clarify parts of the text which have confused them
- Connect the events in the text to prior knowledge or experience

Reading comprehension is defined as the level of understanding of a text/message. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text/message. Comprehension is a "creative, multifaceted process" dependent upon four language skills: phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Proficient reading depends on the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly. It is also determined by an individual's cognitive development, which is "the construction of thought processes". Some people learn through education or instruction and others through direct experiences. There are specific traits that determine how successfully an individual will comprehend text, including prior knowledge about the subject, well developed language, and the ability to make inferences. Lastly, is the ability to be self-correcting to solve comprehension problems as they arise? When a person reads a text he engages in a complex array of cognitive processes. He is simultaneously using his awareness and understanding of phonemes (individual sound "pieces" in language), phonics (connection between letters and sounds and the relationship between sounds, letters and words) and ability to comprehend or construct meaning from the text. This last component of the act of reading is reading comprehension. It cannot occur independent of the other two elements of the process. At the same time, it is the most difficult and most important of the three.

There are two elements that make up the process of reading comprehension: vocabulary knowledge and text comprehension. In order to understand a text the reader must be able to comprehend the vocabulary used in the piece of writing. If the individual words don't make the sense then the overall story will not either. Children can draw on their prior knowledge of vocabulary, but they also need to continually be taught new words. The best vocabulary instruction occurs at the point of need. Parents and teachers should pre-teach new words that a child will encounter in a text or aid her in understanding unfamiliar words as she comes upon them in the writing. In addition to being able to understand each distinct word in a text, the child also has to be able to put them together to develop an overall conception of what it is trying to say. This is text comprehension. Text comprehension is much more complex and varied that vocabulary knowledge. Readers use many different text comprehension strategies to develop reading comprehension. These include monitoring for understanding, answering and

generating questions, summarizing and being aware of and using a text's structure to aid comprehension.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is no one, widely accepted definition of reading to be found in the relevant literature. Therefore, various definitions of reading must be considered. The simplest definition of reading is proposed by Grabe and Stroller (2002). They define reading as "the ability to draw meaning from the printed page suggested three different categories of reading strategies (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002): a) Global Reading Strategies (GLOB): which include intentional and carefully planned generalised reading strategies that help the reader adapt to reading at their own speed and with a purpose, previewing and predicting the topic of the text, etc. b) Problem Solving Strategies (PROB): more bottomup specific problem-solving or repair strategies that readers employ when they come across problems in understanding textual information. c) Support Reading Strategies (SUP): which involve simple strategies such as taking notes, underlining or highlighting the textual information, and using reference materials like dictionaries that help the readers understand the text. In this respect, the theoretical framework of the study relied on Sheorey and Mokhtari's (2001) view that the reader's metacognitive knowledge about reading strategies may be influenced by their beliefs, culture-specific instructional practices and proficiency in the L2.

Comprehensive reading curricula

Good readers, at a minimum, need to be able to identify main ideas and details; distinguish between facts and opinions; draw inferences; determine author intent, stance, and bias; summarize; synthesize two or more reading passages; and extend textual information to new tasks, such as class projects, oral presentations, and written assignments (Grabe and Stoller 2013). Furthermore, capable readers need a repertoire of reading strategies and the ability to apply them in meaningful combinations, at the right times, to achieve their reading goals (Anderson 2009). Skilled readers also need to be able to read fluently, though at different rates for different reading goals, while maintaining comprehension. For all of this to occur, students' motivation to read needs to be nurtured (Komiyama 2009). Fortunately, explicit instruction that focuses on reading-skills development can greatly help EFL students become more skilled, strategic, motivated, and confident readers.

A comprehensive approach to reading instruction not only gives students plenty of opportunities to read but it also addresses the various aspects of reading that must coalesce for students to become good readers. In comprehensive reading curricula, students read a lot and often. They read level-appropriate texts, with the expectation that reading occurs in every class. Students also read at home, where feasible. Typically, students are held accountable for more than answers to post-reading comprehension questions. In ideal reading curricula, we see a commitment to building student motivation for reading. Motivated students are more engaged as active members of the classroom community and more willing to tackle challenging texts. They also read in and out of class because they want to, not because they are told to do so. Comprehensive reading curricula recognize the importance of reading fluency. A slow reader, who reads one word at a time, simply cannot be a good reader. A commitment to reading-fluency practice— at word, phrase, and passage levels—is the hallmark of curricula that reflect

not only the nature of good reading but also respond to the needs of developing readers. It is widely recognized that fluent reading at the word, phrase, and passage levels is essential for efficient reading. However, proficient readers read at different rates, depending on their purpose(s) for reading: reading for the gist (skimming), reading for general comprehension, reading to learn, etc.

Different Comprehension Strategies to improve Student's reading comprehension

Reading different types of texts requires the use of different reading strategies and approaches. Making reading an active, observable process can be very beneficial to struggling readers. A good reader interacts with the text in order to develop an understanding of the information before them. Some good reader strategies are predicting, connecting, inferring, summarizing, analyzing and critiquing. There are many resources and activities educators and instructors of reading can use to help with reading strategies in specific content areas and disciplines. Some examples are graphic organizers, talking to the text, anticipation guides, double entry journals, interactive reading and note taking guides, chunking, and summarizing. The use of effective comprehension strategies is highly important when learning to improve reading comprehension. These strategies provide specific instructions for developing and retaining comprehension skills. Implementing the following instructions with intermittent feedback has been found to improve reading comprehension across all ages, specifically those affected by mental disabilities. There are different comprehension strategies to improve students reading comprehension.

Question- Answer Relationships (QAR) Strategy

Questioning is effective for improving comprehension because it gives the students a purpose for reading, focuses attention on what must be learned, helps develop active thinking while reading, helps monitor comprehension, helps review content, and relates what is learned to what is already known (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001).

Raphael (1986) developed an approach called QAR or Question Answer-Relationships which teaches students how to distinguish questions with answers that are found "in the book" and questions with answers found "in my head." Raphael's (1986) research with QAR has proven that when students are taught to use the strategy their ability to answer questions correctly improves. Raphael also found that through QAR, students developed a language for talking about the strategies they use to answer questions. Understanding how Question-Answer-Relationships work is crucial for learning.

The question–answer relationship (QAR) strategy helps students understand the different types of questions. By learning that the answers to some questions are "Right There" in the text, that some answers require a reader to "Think and Search," and that some answers can only be answered "On My Own," students recognize that they must first consider the question before developing an answer. Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) is one strategy purported as providing students with ways of dealing with tests of reading comprehension generally encountered in the classroom. Question-Answer relationship (QAR) is a strategy to be used after students have read. QAR teaches students how to decide what types of questions they are being asked and where to find the answers to them. Four types of questions are examined in the QAR.

Four types of questions are examined in the QAR:

Right There Questions: Literal questions whose answers can be found in the text. Often the words used in the question are the same words found in the text.

Think and Search Questions: Answers are gathered from several parts of the text and put together to make meaning.

Author and You: These questions are based on information provided in the text but the student is required to relate it to their own experience. Although the answer does not lie directly in the text, the student must have read it in order to answer the question.

1. On My Own: These questions do not require the student to have read the passage but he/she must use their background or prior knowledge to answer the question.

2. Read a short passage aloud to your students.

3. Have predetermined questions you will ask after you stop reading. When you have finished reading, read the questions aloud to students and model how you decide which type of question you have been asked to answer.

4. Show students how find information to answer the question (i.e., in the text, from your own experiences, etc.).

Why use question–answer relationship?

- It can improve students' reading comprehension.
- It teaches students how to ask questions about their reading and where to find the answers to them.
- It helps students to think about the text they are reading and beyond it, too.
- It inspires them to think creatively and work cooperatively while challenging them to use higher-level thinking skills.
- It also help the students to think aloud, which helps them become aware of and analyze their own learning processes.

Paragraph Shrinking

Paragraph shrinking is an activity developed as part of the Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS). The paragraph shrinking strategy allows each student to take turns reading, pausing, and summarizing the main points of each paragraph. Students provide each other with feedback as a way to monitor comprehension.

It helps students develop their reading comprehension skills.

It allows each student to take turns reading, pausing, and summarizing the main points of each paragraph.

Concept Map

A concept map is a visual organizer that can enrich students' understanding of a new concept. Using a graphic organizer, students think about the concept in several ways. Most concept map

organizers engage students in answering questions such as, "What is it? What is it like? What are some examples?" Concept maps deepen understanding and comprehension.

- It helps children organize new information.
- It helps students to make meaningful connections between the main idea and other information.
- They're easy to construct and can be used within any content area.

Story Sequence

Sequencing is one of many skills that contributes to students' ability to comprehend what they read. Sequencing refers to the identification of the components of a story — the beginning, middle, and end — and also to the ability to retell the events within a given text in the order in which they occurred. The ability to sequence events in a text is a key comprehension strategy, especially for narrative texts. Sequencing is also an important component of problem-solving across subjects.

- It assists with comprehension, especially for narrative texts.
- Sequence structures help students of varying abilities organize information and ideas efficiently.
- Sequencing is also an important component of problem-solving across the curriculum, including science and social studies.

Story Map

A story map is a strategy that uses a graphic organizer to help students learn the elements of a book or story. By identifying story characters, plot, setting, problem and solution, students read carefully to learn the details. There are many different types of story map graphic organizers. The most basic focus on the beginning, middle, and end of the story. More advanced organizers focus more on plot or character traits.

- They improve students' comprehension
- They provide students with a framework for identifying the elements of a story.
- They help students of varying abilities organize information and ideas efficiently.

Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA)

The Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) is a comprehension strategy that guides students in asking questions about a text, making predictions, and then reading to confirm or refute their predictions. The DRTA process encourages students to be active and thoughtful readers, enhancing their comprehension.

- It encourages students to be active and thoughtful readers.
- It activates students' prior knowledge.
- It teaches students to monitor their understanding of the text as they're reading.
- It helps strengthen reading and critical thinking skills.

Reading Guides

Reading guides can assist with developing students' comprehension. They help students navigate reading material, especially difficult chapters or nonfiction reading. Students respond to a teacher-created written guide of prompts as they read an assigned text. Reading Guides help students to comprehend the main points of the reading and understand the organizational structure of a text.

- It can be developed for a variety of reading material and reading levels.
- It helps guide students through what they are about to read, and helps students monitor their comprehension while reading.
- It helps students to follow the main points of the reading and understand the organization of a text.
- It helps readers to think actively as they read and have a purpose for reading.

Jigsaw

Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy that enables each student of a "home" group to specialize in one aspect of a topic (for example, one group studies habitats of rainforest animals, another group studies predators of rainforest animals). Students meet with members from other groups who are assigned the same aspect, and after mastering the material, return to the "home" group and teach the material to their group members. With this strategy, each student in the "home" group serves as a piece of the topic's puzzle and when they work together as a whole, they create the complete jigsaw puzzle.

- It helps build comprehension.
- It encourages cooperative learning among students.
- It helps improve listening, communication, and problem-solving skills.

Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal teaching refers to an instructional activity in which students become the teacher in small group reading sessions. Teachers model, then help students learn to guide group discussions using four strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting. Once students have learned the strategies, they take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading a dialogue about what has been read.

- It encourages students to think about their own thought process during reading.
- It helps students learn to be actively involved and monitor their comprehension as they read.
- It teaches students to ask questions during reading and helps make the text more comprehensible.

The listen-read-discuss strategy

The listen-read-discuss strategy helps students comprehend text. Before reading, students listen to a short lecture delivered by the teacher. The students then read a text selection about the topic. After reading, there is a large group discussion or students engage in small group

discussions about the topic. During the discussion, students compare and contrast the information from the lecture with the information they read.

- It helps students comprehend material presented orally.
- It builds students' prior knowledge before they read a text.
- It engages struggling readers in classroom discussions.
- This simple, flexible strategy can be used across all curriculum areas with almost any text.

CONCLUSION

Comprehension is the essential higher level skill of actually understanding the material being read. Obviously, comprehension is the goal of proficient reading. We can help students develop these critical comprehension skills with various direct instruction strategies. Most activities that develop comprehension skills can be effectively applied as a part of guided reading. Comprehension is just one skill necessary for proficient reading. Reading comprehension is made of many different skills. These skills are created and developed by using a variety of reading strategies to encourage students to interact with text in meaningful ways. We hope you can use some of the comprehension strategies we've listed above and we want to hear what comprehension strategies work best for you.

REFERENCES

Books

Brewster, J., G. Ellis, and D. Girard. 2002. The primary English teacher's guide. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education.
Core Skills: Reading Comprehension: Reproducible Grade 8 *by Donna Loughman*
Ezell, H. K., F. W. Kohler, M. Jarzynka, and P. S. Strain. 1992. Use of peer-assisted procedures to teach QAR reading comprehension strategies to third-grade children. Education and Treatment of Children 15 (3): 205–227.
Peregoy, S. F., and O. F. Boyle. 2008. Reading, writing, and learning in ESL: A resource book for teaching K–12 English learners. 5th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
Raphael, T. 1982. Improving question-answering performance through instruction. Reading Education Report No. 32. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: Center for the Study of Reading.
Reading Comprehension Success in 20 Minutes a Day *by Learning Express Editors* 8th Grade Reading Comprehension Success *by Elizabeth Chesla*
Steck-Vaughn Core Skills Reading Comprehension: Workbook Grade 8 *by STECK-VAUGHN*