

Effective strategies for reading comprehension

Almatova Umida Islomovna

Djizzakh State Pedagogical Institute.

*The faculty of Foreign language Department of
Natural Interdisciplinary Foreign languages, Teacher*

Erkinova Saida Zufar qizi

Djizzakh State Pedagogical Institute

Student of foreign languages faculty

E-mail: Saidaerkinova0107@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Reading is an interactive process in which readers construct a meaningful representation of a text using effective reading strategies. Effective reading strategies are considered as significant skills that have received the special focus on students' reading comprehension proficiency. In this paper, the researchers define the term reading and reading comprehension, explain the types of reading, declare models of reading process, state theories of reading comprehension, review the effective strategies for reading comprehension, and finally mention findings of learners' reading strategies and their reading comprehension proficiency. The review of literature indicates that reading strategies play a significant role in improving the students' reading comprehension skill.

Key words: *Reading comprehension, theories, strategies, reading score*

I. Introduction

Reading is a lifelong skill for academic learning and success in school as well as reading is a basic life skill. Thai university students have to spend a great time on reading materials. However, the students face the problem of not understanding the passages of what they had read. This is reflected in their poor reading scores. In reading, students need to use various strategies to help them in the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information. Therefore, reading strategies are assumed to be important for students reading comprehension and the reading strategies equip the students with the skills of how to handle their reading effectively. Research reveals that good readers are actively involved with the text and they are aware of processes they use to understand while they read. Teachers can help students improve their reading comprehension through reading strategies. Reading strategies are purposeful means of comprehending the author's message. They are believed to influence readers in adjusting their reading behavior to work on text difficulty, task demands and other contextual variables. We can identify the types of reading strategies as follows:

A. Skimming

Skimming is a reading technique for speed reading. The purpose of skimming is to get an overview of the organization of the text and its main idea from a passage in a book. To skim a passage,

the readers read through the passage quickly and skips the details. They read the first sentence of each paragraph. Each paragraph usually contains a topic sentence which states the main idea. A topic sentence can appear differently within a paragraph.

The most common location of a topic sentence appears in the first sentence of the first paragraph. The second most likely place for a topic sentence is the first sentence of the last paragraph.

B. Scanning

Scanning is a reading skill that allows the reader to locate specific information quickly. With scanning you already know before you begin what sort of information you are searching for. The purpose of scanning is to get specific

information. Scanning is especially important for improving your reading. Many students try to read every word when they read, so they read very slowly. Scanning can help the students learn to read and understand faster.

C. Making Predictions

Hutchinson defines prediction as “A matter of using an existing knowledge of a pattern or system in order to anticipate what is likely in a novel situation”. Many researches have shown that good readers use their experiences and background knowledge to make predictions and formulate ideas as they read. This strategy also allows students interaction, which increases students’ interests and improves their understanding of the text. Making predictions is a strategy in which readers use information from picture, title, to make predictions about the story. The title of a text can operate memories of texts, permitting them to guess the content of a new text. During reading, successful readers can make predictions about what will occur next, or what opinions the writer will offer to support a discussion. Readers try to assess these predictions ceaselessly and change any prediction that is not approved by the reading.

D. Questioning

Questioning helps students monitor their comprehension and stay engaged and interested in their reading. Readers can use the questioning before, during, and after reading. The questioning process requires readers to ask questions of themselves to construct meaning, enhance understanding, find answers, solve problems, find information, and discover new information. In this strategy, the students return to the text throughout the reading process to find the answers to the questions. Questioning helps students to clarify and comprehend what they are reading. In this strategy, asking appropriate questions permits successful readers to concentrate on the most important information of a text.

Asking questions while involving in the reading process provides students with an opportunity to think about what are they reading, be active and independent readers, and be able to appropriately reflect on their reading.

Moreover, there a lot of strategies for reading comprehension. These strategies are explained in detail in this section and can help students who are able to decode well but have difficulty understanding what they read—and they’re beneficial for all students:

- 1. Activating and Using Background Knowledge:** In this strategy, readers activate their background knowledge and apply it to aid them comprehend what they are reading. This knowledge consists of individuals’ experiences with the world together with their concepts for how written text work, involving word recognition, print concepts, word meaning, and how the text is. Schema theory is very important in comprehension process. This theory is based on how people form and activate their

previous knowledge. This theory explains that as persons learn about the world, they create a series of knowledge structures or schemas. These schemas develop and shift as the persons learn new information through experience and reading. For instance, a child's schema for dog can involve her or his comprehending of the family pet such as white, furry, and fun. When the child gets more experiences with a lot of dogs in different environments, the dog schema develop and can be improved. It can relate to other schema-kinds of dogs like colors of dogs; foods that dogs eat; places where they stay when the family is on holiday; and dangerous dogs. Cognitive scientists stated that successful readers permanently relate their prior knowledge to the new knowledge they face in texts. Good readers activate their schema when they start reading. The first schema impacts how readers comprehend and react to a text. Schemas are particularly significant to reading comprehension. When learners have knowledge of a text's organization, this can help them to understand better that text.

2. Generating and Asking Questions: In this strategy, readers ask themselves pertinent questions in reading the text. This strategy assists readers to combine information, recognize main ideas, and summarize information. Asking appropriate questions permits successful readers to concentrate on the most important information of a text. Creating relevant questions helps good readers to concentrate on difficulties with comprehension and to take the necessary actions to solve those problems.

3. Making Inferences: Readers assess or draw conclusions from information in a text. In this strategy, writers do not always provide full information about a topic, place, personality, or happening. Instead, they provide information that readers can use to read by making inferences that integrate information of the text with their previous knowledge. Through this process, readers can improve their skills to make meaning. Being able to make inferences is an important factor for readers' successful reading.

4. Predicting: In this strategy, readers are able to gain meaning from a text by making educated guesses. Successful readers apply forecasting to make their existing knowledge to new information from a text to obtain meaning from what they read. Before reading, readers may apply what they know about a writer to forecast what a text will be about. The title of a text can operate memories of texts with the same content, permitting them to guess the content of a new text. During reading, successful readers can make predictions about what will occur next, or what opinions the writer will offer to support a discussion. Readers try to assess these predictions ceaselessly and change any prediction that is not approved by the reading.

5. Summarizing: Readers combine information in a text to elaborate in their own words what the text is about. Summarizing is a significant strategy that allows readers to remember text rapidly. In this strategy, readers can be aware of text structure, of what is significant in a text, and of how opinions are related to each other. Effective summarizing of explanatory text includes things like condensing the steps in a scientific process, the steps of development of an art movement, or the episodes that result in certain important historical happenings. Effective summarizing of narrative text includes things such as connecting happenings in a story line or recognizing the elements that stimulate a character's activities and conduct.

6. Visualizing: Readers can make mental picture of a text to comprehend processes they face during reading. This skill shows that a reader perceives a text. Readers who form a mental image as they read are better able to remember what they have read than those who do not. Visualizing is very important when it is used for narrative texts. When readers read narrative texts, they can easily

understand what is happening by visualizing the place, personalities, or operations of a plan. It can also be used for the reading of expository texts. Readers visualizing steps in a process or stages in a happening or forming an image that help them to recall some abstract ideas or significant names.

7. Comprehension Monitoring: In this strategy, readers have the ability to know when they comprehend what they read, when they do not perceive, and to apply suitable strategies to make better their understanding. The important point here is that successful readers can make good decisions about which strategies to apply and when to use them. A lot of students can gain from explicit instruction that teaches them to apply particular strategies for understanding a text. The other point is that particular comprehension strategies can be taught and learned and that their conscious use can help readers to ameliorate their comprehension. The findings indicated that reading strategy is one of the powerful factors in improving reading comprehension skill. The findings also revealed that foreign language reading should incorporate explicit strategy training.

The findings of this study showed that reading strategies have a great impact on the students' reading comprehension ability. Students are not just passive receivers of information but they are active makers of meaning. Successful readers try to apply numerous skills to grasp meaning from the texts. Readers should be involved in the reading process by using different strategies to monitor their meaning. This study emphasized the idea that comprehension processes are influenced by a lot of strategies. All of these strategies work together to construct the meaning process easily and effectively. Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that reading materials and activities should be very attractive to students in order to understand a text easily and they should be related to the students' proficiency levels. Teachers have a big responsibility to motivate their students in reading these materials, should be very sensitive to their learners' comprehension difficulties, and should help their learners to modify their views towards reading and have positive attitudes towards their reading activities so that they can better understand the different texts.

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