

PLANNING FOR READING: ACTIVITIES FOR BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER READING

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ABSTRACT

Reading is an interactive process that goes on between the reader and the text, resulting in comprehension. The text presents letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs that encode meaning. The reader uses knowledge, skills, and strategies to determine what that meaning is. Good readers tend to use a range of strategies while reading such as making predictions before reading, making connections to personal experiences and knowledge, and engaging in self-monitoring (on-going checks of text comprehension). Teachers can model, teach, and promote the use of these and other effective comprehension strategies to help their students become even more proficient readers. The need for students to be actively engaged in the reading process. Teachers can explain key strategies and model the types of actions students can take before, during, and after reading.

***Keywords:** Reading, activities before, during and after reading*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an activity with a purpose. A person may read in order to gain information or verify existing knowledge, or in order to critique a writer's ideas or writing style. A person may also read for enjoyment, or to enhance knowledge of the language being read. The purpose(s) for reading guide the reader's selection of texts.

The purpose for reading also determines the appropriate approach to reading comprehension. A person who needs to know whether she can afford to eat at a particular restaurant needs to comprehend the pricing information provided on the menu, but does not need to recognize the name of every appetizer listed. A person reading poetry for enjoyment needs to recognize the words the poet uses and the ways they are put together, but does not need to identify main idea and supporting details. However, a

person using a scientific article to support an opinion needs to know the vocabulary that is used, understand the facts and cause-effect sequences that are presented, and recognize ideas that are presented as hypotheses and givens.

Reading research shows that good readers

- 1) Read extensively
- 2) Integrate information in the text with existing knowledge
- 3) Have a flexible reading style, depending on what they are reading
- 4) Are motivated
- 5) Rely on different skills interacting: perceptual processing, phonemic processing, recall
- 6) Read for a purpose; reading serves a function

READING AS A PROCESS

Reading is an interactive process that goes on between the reader and the text, resulting in comprehension. The text presents letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs that encode meaning. The reader uses knowledge, skills, and strategies to determine what that meaning is.

Reader knowledge, skills, and strategies include:

1. Linguistic competence: the ability to recognize the elements of the writing system; knowledge of vocabulary; knowledge of how words are structured into sentences
2. Discourse competence: knowledge of discourse markers and how they connect parts of the text to one another
3. Sociolinguistic competence: knowledge about different types of texts and their usual structure and content
4. Strategic competence: the ability to use top-down strategies, as well as knowledge of the language (a bottom-up strategy)

The purpose(s) for reading and the type of text determine the specific knowledge, skills, and strategies that readers need to apply to achieve comprehension. Reading comprehension is thus much more than decoding. Reading comprehension results when the reader knows which skills and strategies are appropriate for the type of text, and understands how to apply them to accomplish the reading purpose.

Good readers tend to use a range of strategies while reading such as making predictions before reading, making connections to personal experiences and knowledge, and engaging in self-monitoring (on-going checks of text comprehension). Teachers can model,

teach, and promote the use of these and other effective comprehension strategies to help their students become even more proficient readers. The need for students to be actively engaged in the reading process. Teachers can explain key strategies and model the types of actions students can take before, during, and after reading. Students will likely need ongoing feedback to facilitate their proficiency at using comprehension strategies. Explicit instruction in the key elements of a strategy helps students at all grade levels.

Developing reading activities involves more than identifying a text that is "at the right level," writing a set of comprehension questions for students to answer after reading, handing out the assignment and sending students away to do it. A fully-developed reading activity supports students as readers through prereading, while-reading, and post-reading activities.

As reading is designed as tasks, keep in mind that complete recall of all the information in a text is an unrealistic expectation even for native speakers. Reading activities that are meant to increase communicative competence should be success oriented and build up students' confidence in their reading ability.

CONSTRUCT THE READING ACTIVITY AROUND A PURPOSE THAT HAS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE STUDENTS

Make sure students understand what the purpose for reading is: to get the main idea, obtain specific information, understand most or all of the messages, enjoy a story, or decide whether or not to read more. Recognizing the purpose for reading will help student select appropriate reading strategies.

Reading Activities should fulfill two major functions.

1. They should help readers understand the particular text they are reading.
2. They should help readers develop good reading strategies for reading other texts.

It is important that instructional activities used for helping students comprehend a particular text also model the way effective readers read. For example, explaining all the unknown words before students read may help them understand the text, but it does not help them know what to do the next time they come to an unknown word. On the other hand, giving student strategies about what to do when they meet an unknown word not only helps them in that instance but it also makes explicit strategies that can be transferred to other reading contexts.

CHECK THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY OF THE TEXT

The factors listed below can help to judge the relative ease or difficulty of a reading text for a particular purpose and a particular group of students.

1. How is the information organized? Does the story line, narrative, or instruction conform to familiar expectations? Texts in which the events are presented in natural chronological order, which have an informative title, and which present the information following an obvious organization (main ideas first, details and examples second) are easier to follow.
2. How familiar are the students with the topic? Remember that misapplication of background knowledge due to cultural differences can create major comprehension difficulties.

3. Does the text contain redundancy? At the lower levels of proficiency, listeners may find short, simple messages easier to process, but students with higher proficiency benefit from the natural redundancy of authentic language.
4. Does the text offer visual support to aid in reading comprehension? Visual aids such as photographs, maps, and diagrams help students preview the content of the text, guess the meanings of unknown words, and check comprehension while reading.

Remember that the level of difficulty of a text is not the same as the level of difficulty of a reading task. Students who lack the vocabulary to identify all of the items on a menu can still determine whether the restaurant serves steak and whether they can afford to order one. A useful way to think about using a text with your class is to divide the planning into three sections (Wallace: 1992):

1. What you will do before the reading;
2. What you and the students while the reading is going on
3. What you will do after the book has been read

This overall plan is a useful framework that works whether you intend to read the book aloud or whether make a planning for student to read by themselves or in small groups.

To begin, try to predict what will be unfamiliar content or language for the students. Look for aspects of everyday life that may not be familiar to recently arrived student. A visit to beach, birthday party school graduation, and many other aspects of life reflected in student's book are not taken for granted by all cultural groups. And there are considerable differences between families within any particular ethnic or cultural group, too.

DISCUSSION

Use Before (pre-reading) activities to prepare students for reading

The purpose of these activities is to prepare for linguistics, cultural, and conceptual difficulties and to activate prior knowledge. They should aim to develop knowledge in relation to the overall meaning of the text, not to deal with every potential difficulty. If students come to the text with a sense of what they have more resources to draw on. The reader will be less dependent on the words on the page and will be able to minimize the disadvantage of having less than native-speaker proficiency in the language.

There is another advantage of well-designed before-reading activities. Because learners will have some sense of overall meaning, they are likely to be able to comprehend more linguistically challenging language than they might otherwise be able to comprehend. The text can therefore also serve the purpose of extending learners' linguistic abilities by providing models of new language.

Here are some examples of before-reading activities. They all provide a context in which the teacher can guide learners into understanding the major concepts and ideas in the text. We can do these steps to interact with the students while start the reading (Gibbons and Cummins: 2002):

1. Predicting from words

Put a word or phrase from the text on the board and ask student to say what they think it will be about, or what words they associate with the topic. Develop a semantic web based on children's suggestions. Add a few words yourself that you know occur in the text; and discuss the meaning.

2. Predicting from Title or First Sentence

Write up the title of the book, or the first sentence of the text, and get children to

predict what kind of text it is (e.g., a narrative or an information text) and what the text will be about. You might wish to guide the class in a way that will best help them deal with the major concepts or events in the text to be read.

3. Predicting from a Key Illustration

Photocopy a key illustration from the book and give student time in pairs or groups to say what they think the topic is about, or what the story will be. For example, based on a text about earthquakes the class would later be reading, one teacher gave the class a picture of the devastation after an earthquake and asked them to guess what had happened. She then introduced some new vocabulary that would occur in the text: tremor, Richter Scale, shocks, aftershocks. Almost all students were quickly able to relate these to the words they knew in their first language.

4. Sequencing Illustrations

Give groups of students a set of picture relating to the story, and ask the students to put them into a possible sequence.

5. Reader Questions

Give students the title of the book or a key illustration and encourage them to pose questions they would like answered. The students using earthquake text wrote questions such as When did it happen? Where did it occur? How many people killed? How big was it? The teacher posted these questions on the wall, and the children looked for answers as they read the text later.

6. Sharing Existing Knowledge

For an information text, use an information grid and ask students to fill in what they already know about the topic. This is best done in groups.

The more time is spent on these kinds of activities, the easier the reading will be, and the more likely it will be that students read for meaning. Don't be tempted to reduce before-reading work to the explanation of a few key words! Of course, if the text you are using is part of a larger unit of work, much of this knowledge building will already be occurring in an ongoing way. One of the great advantages of an integrated approach is that reading occurs in a context where students are already developing an overall schema for the topic. And comprehension is much more likely to be improved when vocabulary and language are associated with broad concepts and recur in an ongoing context, than when instruction is in terms of single words or language items (Carrell:1998)

During-Reading Activities

The purpose of these activities is to model good reading strategies. Good readers are actively involved in the text; they constantly interrogate and interact with it, and they predict what is coming. This is largely an unconscious process for fluent readers. The aim of during-reading activities is to make explicit some of these unconscious processes and to demonstrate the interactive nature of reading.

Once students have some idea of the genre and content of what they will be reading, it is time for the reading itself. Depending on the age and reading levels of the students, the first three activities described next are recommended as regular activities to use (Gibbons and Cummins: 2002):

1. Modeled Reading

It's useful to read the text aloud to the class the first time as a reading model for the students, using appropriate pausing and expression. Try to bring the text to life-students need to see that print has

meaning and is not simply a functionally empty exercise. With lower-level learners, remember that the more times something is read or heard, the more comprehension there will be. So don't read a text just once. A favorite book used in shared book time can be read again and again. As you read, encourage the students to see if their predictions were correct, but make clear that it doesn't matter if they weren't- often our predictions about things are wrong.

2. Skimming and Scanning the Text

These are important reading strategies with which students need to become familiar. When readers skim a text, they read it quickly to get an idea of the general content. When they scan they also read fast, but the purpose is to look out for particular information. Searching down a telephone list, a train time table, or a TV guide with the aim of finding a particular item are everyday examples of this. Some learners may have been trained to read in only one way-focusing on each word and every detail on the first reading. These students in particular will need practice in learning to skim and scan. It's important that you also make explicit the contexts in which we skim and scan, and point out that we read in different ways depending on our purpose for reading.

When students are going to read the text alone, and particularly if you haven't first read it aloud yourself, ask them first to skim it quickly. Explain that the purpose of this is to get a general idea of what it's about and a sense of the main ideas. Students can also scan the text to check any predictions they made. Again, it doesn't matter if these predictions were wrong; the actual process of having made predictions will encourage them to read the text more interactively. When students go into a text with a misconception, they are more likely to take note of the information presented there because information that runs counter to

one's expectations is usually more memorable than information that simply confirms what one already thinks. While the students are skimming the text on this first reading, they can also see if they can find the answer to any questions they asked.

3. Rereading for Detail

Let the students read the text again, more carefully this time. The purpose of this is to make sure they have understood the information. Get them to underline or make a note of words or phrases they don't understand. They can discuss in pairs. Remind them of strategies they can use to work out the meaning of unknown words, and point out that three things can help us:

- 1). The language that surrounds the word in text;
- 2). Our knowledge of the topic;
- 3). What we know about similar words.

Also remind them that knowing the exact meaning of every word is not essential every time we read, unless it prevents us from gaining the information we need. Encourage students to use the following strategies when they are faced with unknown word or phrase:

- 1). Read to the end of the sentence to see if this helps in understanding the word.
- 2). Look at the text that comes before and after the word; the word may be easier to understand later, with other clues to meaning.
- 3). Use pictures to help guess the meaning.
- 4). Think about the function of the word: is it a noun, verb, adjective?
- 5). Look for the same word somewhere else; its meaning might be clearer there.
- 6). Look for familiar word parts, such as prefixes and suffixes.
- 7). Use a bilingual or English-English dictionary. Note that students should turn to a dictionary as a last resort and

use it in combination with the other strategies. While dictionaries are a useful resource and students should be encouraged to use them when necessary, relying too heavily on a dictionary slows up reading and works against the development of the strategies listed above. It should also be remembered that definitions often don't adequately explain a meaning in the particular context in which it is being used, and that students may often select a wrong or inappropriate meaning.

4. Shared Book

With young learners, shared book (sometimes called shared reading) can be a highly effective early reading activity. It involves using a Big Book in a group of whole-class activity. Shared book models how an experienced reader reads and how reading involves getting meaning from print. This understanding is particularly important when students are at an early stage of reading development.

For shared book, introduce the book through a range of before-reading activities, and then read it aloud several times, encouraging children to join in as they remember or recognize words or phrases. In later reading, using a pointer to point to words as you read helps children link the sounds of words with their shape on the page, and demonstrates left-to-right directionality and word spacing.

5. Word Masking

Once Big Book has been read several times, mask some of the words with small pieces of paper. Ask children to predict what the word is. Allow time to discuss alternative choices. For example, if the word is replied someone guesses said, respond positively to this and use it as a basis for discussion. Among the word you mask, include not only "content" words,

such as pronouns and conjunctions. As we mentioned earlier, these functional or grammatical words are important in enabling readers to use syntactic cues.

In later rereading you can use this activity to develop vocabulary knowledge by focusing on alternatives for some of the words. This is a good way to develop vocabulary knowledge in context, and to build up word lists that can be displayed for children to use as a resource for their own writing.

6. Pause and Predict

As you are reading, stop at significant points and ask questions like what do you think is going to happen? If you were (character's name), what would you do? The goal is to engage learners in the process of meaning making, not to have them verbalize the "right" answers.

7. Shadow Reading

Record yourself reading the text, and use this recording with small groups of children or individuals, who should listen and follow the text from their own copy. Sometimes ask children to read aloud along with tape. While reading aloud is not the same as "reading" shadowing is nevertheless a valuable activity because it demonstrates how meaning is made through text, and how intonation, stress, and the patterns of spoken language are related to the words on the page.

8. Summarizing the Text

If the students are unable to summarize what they have read, chances are strong that they have not understood the text fully, and that they are still unfamiliar with the content. (Remember how hard it was to summarize the "laundry text" when you didn't know what it was about). Note that it isn't necessarily appropriate to summarize all kinds of texts. However, if this something you want to

focus on, on here are some ways to help students practice summarizing skills.

- 1). Get students to write a summary. Limit the maximum number of sentences or words they can use, pointing out that this means they must focus only on the most important points.
- 2). Ask students to suggest a little for each paragraphs
- 3). Either alone or with teacher support, have students write two or three sentences under each paragraph title and use these to write a short summary of the whole passage.
- 4). If you are using a narrative, get students to retell it in shorter and shorter ways until it is as short as possible. Write this up on the board and then discuss with students the kinds of information that is now missing.
- 5). Have students explained the key points to someone else in less than one minute.
- 6). Get groups of students to decide on one sentence from the text that best sums it up or is most central to the story. There will probably be some disagreement about this, but the discussion should help students sort out key points and help you see how they are interpreting the text.

9. Jigsaw Reading

You need three or four different readings around the same topic. If you have varying reading levels in the class, include reading and a more challenging reading. Place students in expert/home grouping. Each group first becomes an "expert" in opne of the readings then shares the information in a mixed group. This kind of activity gives reading a real purpose, since the aim is to share what one has read with others. It is also useful way

of having readers at different levels work collaboratively

(even the poorer readers will be able to contribute in the group since their reading will have information that other members in the group don't have). Finally, it provides an authentic context for developing summarizing skills, since each group of experts must decide on the key points they are later going to share with others. Depending on the level of the students, it may be useful to focus on note-making skills here, or to provide an information grid to guide students in locating key information.

10. Reading Aloud

Listening to an experienced reader helps learners recognize that good readers make meaning, and it plays an important role in the development of reading competence. While this is especially important to young learners, the value of reading aloud should not be neglected with older learner. Serializing a longer book presents many opportunities for predicting what will happen. Or you may choose to simply whet children's appetites by reading only part of a book and leaving it for them to finish. It is also important to read nonfiction texts with students. This will help them get used to the more complex language patterns of transactional prose, and to familiarize them with different kinds of texts.

After -Reading Activities

These activities are based on the assumption that students are already familiar with the text, and no longer have basic comprehension difficulties in reading it. The activities use the text as a springboard, my fulfill any of these major purposes (Gibbons and Cummins: 2002):

1. To use the now-familiar text as a basis for specific language study, such as to focus on a particular item of grammar,

idiom, or phonic, knowledge that occurs in the text.

2. To allow students an opportunity to respond creatively to what they have read, such as through art or drama activities.
3. To focus students more deeply on the information in the text, such as by using information transfer activities that represent the information in a different form.

Well, designed after-reading activities usually require students to keep returning to the text and rereading it to check on specific information or language use.

1. Story Innovation

Story innovation can be a teacher -led or small-group activity. Using the original story as a basis, key words are changed to make a new story, while retaining, the underlying structure. For example, students could change the characters in the folktale The Elephant and the Mouse to a whale and little fish. While the central meaning of the tale should remain the same (the weak helps the strong and they become friends), key words and events are changed to fit in the new characters. As the changes are made, the story is written up on a large sheet of paper.

2. Innovating on the Ending

Write a new ending to a story, in groups or as a whole class

3. Cartoon Strip

In groups, or individually, a student turn the story into a cartoon strip, using the words of the dialogue in the original to write the "speech bubbles."

4. Reader's Theatre

In its simplest form, you provide a group of students with copies of the story. Each chooses the dialogues of one of the

characters to read, while other students share the narration. This can be practiced until it is word perfect and then performed to the class. Readers' Theatre is a much better context for students reading aloud than the traditional "reading around the class," since it allows them a chance to practice the reading (which is what adults would do if they knew were going to read in front of others), and it provides a meaningful purpose for the reading.

CONCLUSSION

Language is learned through reading; it is not simply a prerequisite for it. Given appropriate texts, learners develop their language skills in the course of reading itself, perhaps because the patterns of language are "open to notice" in written language in a way that they are not in spoken language. So the more fluently and widely that student read, the more exposure to the second language they will gain.

Good readers tend to use a range of strategies while reading such as making predictions before reading, making connections to personal experiences and knowledge, and engaging in self-monitoring (on-going checks of text comprehension). Teachers can model, teach, and promote the use of these and other effective comprehension strategies to help their students become even more proficient readers. The need for students to be actively engaged in the reading process. Teachers can explain key strategies and model the types of actions students can take before, during, and after reading.

We have seen how unfamiliarity with aspects of a text (the knowledge it assumes, the genre, or the language itself) may cause difficulties for second language readers. While in some cases this may lead

you to decide not to use a book, it may be more important for learning if, instead, you find ways to build bridges into the text, through the kind of activities you choose to do before, during and after reading. In this way, students can gain access to a wider range of books and richer reading experiences.

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