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ABSTRACT

Some general principles of teaching reading in the second language classroom are reviewed. To illustrate the connection between theory and practice, examples are provided of teaching practices used with adult learners of English as a Second language (ESL) who have Chinese and Vietnamese-language backgrounds. A discussion follows of how instruction in reading strategies affects reading comprehension, how strategy instruction can be conducted, and which instructional activities appear to increase the effectiveness of strategy instruction. Issues discussed include how to define and explain strategies, classroom procedures for direct strategy instruction, individual practice tasks used, individualizing strategy instruction and practice, and the relationship between strategy use and text selection. Appended materials include the instructions for a reading task and related comprehension questions, and a sample reading checklist used by the teacher for analyzing and recording the student's skills. Contains 29 references. (MSE)

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Reading Comprehension in the Second Language Classroom:
A Hands-on Approach to Teaching and Learning Reading Strategies

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“As it approaches seven o’clock , my Vietnamese and Chinese learners rush into class - some exhausted from working long hours during the day - others eager to begin the evening lesson. I jokingly tell them I have installed a device at the front door of the classroom which will detect their electronic dictionaries, their prized-possessions from Vietnam and Hong Kong which they are ever-so dependent on. They laugh. For some it is security - for others it a strategy - for me, it is a challenge.”

Introduction

Reading, although it has been defined in a number of complex ways, can best be defined as an active process in which readers use powerful strategies in the pursuit of meaning (Goodman, 1996). Reading is a meaning-making process through which readers employ strategies to facilitate their comprehension. Strategies, on the other hand, can best be defined as learning techniques which make learning more effective and efficient (Oxford and Crookall, 1989). Over the years, a great deal of research has focused on the reading process and the strategies that readers employ while reading. Although much of this research has been related to first language acquisition, researchers in second language acquisition soon began their own investigations into reading strategies. Most of these studies were related to reader proficiency and strategy use. Numerous studies have shown that there is indeed a relationship between high proficient readers and the use of reading strategies. Such studies have indicated that successful readers use different strategies than unsuccessful readers. Hosenfeld (1977), for example, used a think-aloud procedure to identify relations between certain types of reading strategies and successful or unsuccessful second language reading and found that successful readers used more effective strategies than unsuccessful readers. Block’s (1986) study of non-proficient readers showed that the poorer readers directed attention to themselves rather than towards the text. Other studies have shown that high proficient readers use strategies more frequently than low proficient readers (Knight, Padron, and Waxman, 1985). Some studies have shown that low proficient readers use fewer strategies and use them less effectively in their reading comprehension (Brown, Armbruster, and Baker, 1983; Garner, 1987; Waxman and Padron, 1987). Lastly, studies have also indicated that better readers are better strategy users as they know which strategies to use and how to use them (Anderson, 1991; Carrell, 1989; Devine, 1987). Overall, this research suggests that good readers possess a number of flexible, adaptable strategies that they use before, during, and after reading to maximize their comprehension (Baker & Brown, 1984; Garner, 1987). Good readers are purposeful, thoughtful and reflective about the reading process, and also monitor and evaluate their understanding of text and use of strategies as they read.

Strategy Training Studies

While previous studies have clearly illustrated that there are differences between high and low proficient readers, or successful and unsuccessful readers in terms of strategy use, significantly less information is provided on how to best improve readers' use of strategies in order to assist them in becoming better readers. This paper will briefly review some of the general principles of teaching reading in the second or foreign language classroom. Specific examples of my own teaching practice with adult ESL learners will be provided throughout the discussion in order for one to conceptualize the connection both theory and practice. Based on a brief review of the literature, and specific examples from my own classroom, the following questions will be addressed. What is the effect of strategy instruction on reading comprehension? How can strategy instruction specifically be operationalized in the classroom? What instructional actions appear to increase the effectiveness of strategy instruction?

A number of first language training studies have been carried out which have shown that comprehension abilities of students have improved with training in reading and comprehension strategies (Miller, 1985; Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Pressley et al, 1989). Such research has sought to better understand the contexts in which reading strategies improve comprehension, the training procedures which are most effective, and the variables which influence strategy instruction. Fewer strategy training studies have been carried out in an L2 context which have been directed at improving the readers' use of strategies through training. The following review; however, will consider research in both L1 and L2 contexts.

Carrell, Pharis and Liberto (1989) showed that strategy training with semantic mapping and with the ETR (experience, text, relationship) method both improved reading comprehension scores. Their study specifically examined if strategy training enhances L2 reading. The study involved a heterogeneous group of 26 ESL students in a level 4 intensive ESL program at a university. Two experimental groups were formed of which one received the semantic mapping training and the other received the ETR training. A control group simply received the pre and posttest. During a four day training session, the first group was given a series of reading passages. Questions were used to stimulate discussion and semantic maps were created. The ETR group received the same passages, however, group activities included note-taking, discussion, comprehension questions and vocabulary activities that related to the texts. Subjects received a pretest prior to the onset of training and a posttest nine days after the training. The tests included questions in varied formats and two out of three passages on the test required the subjects to complete semantic maps. Scoring was done according to predetermined criteria. The results indicated that the control group did not have significant gains scores between their pre- and posttests on any of four

dependent measures which were multiple-choice questions, open-ended questions, cloze semantic mapping, and open-ended semantic mapping questions. Each training group, however, showed significant gain scores on the open-ended questions. Carrell, Pharis and Liberto (1989) do caution, however, that such results need to be supported by further research in this area.

Kern (1989) conducted a study involving fifty three students enrolled in a French class to determine the effect of strategy training on reading. One treatment group received explicit instruction in reading strategy use in addition to the normal course content and the control group received no instruction in reading strategy use but covered the same material. Subjects were presented with a passage in French and were asked to report what they were thinking as they read each sentence, what they understood, what they did not understand, how they went about determining the meaning of unfamiliar words, whether they made predictions or inferences, and whether they translated into English. Both a comprehension and word inference measure were derived from the reading task. Data analysis revealed that reading strategy training had a strong positive effect on L2 readers comprehension gain scores. Those who had the most difficulty reading, appeared to benefit the most from reading strategy instruction which suggests that mid and high ability readers may have already transferred more of their effective L1 reading strategies to the second language reading task. In terms of the effects of such strategy training on word inference ability, the results were less clear. Overall, Kern (1989) reported significant improvement with FL readers of French over a semester of training with emphasis placed on word, sentence, and discourse analysis strategies. Similar strategy studies performed with L1 readers have yielded similar results (Geva, 1983; Singer and Donlan, 1982). Barnett (1988) also reported improvement in reading comprehension from a year-long strategy training experiment in reading. In a related experiment over one semester, however, she did not see significant improvement in the training group.

Strategy instruction was also found to be beneficial to low-level readers as illustrated in a year-long case study conducted by Jimenez and Gamez (1996). During a two week period in a middle school, three Spanish/English bilingual students were taught how to engage in think-alouds while reading, and explicit metacognitive and cognitive reading strategies in order to improve their poor reading skills. Use of culturally relevant texts, student-generated discourse, and instruction designed to promote comprehension was found to have a strong potential for promoting and fostering the reading ability of such students who were performing at low levels of literacy in the middle school grades. In another study involving third grade Spanish/English bilingual students, Kucer (1995) spent one year in a classroom teaching students a repertoire of strategies to help children become more effective and efficient readers. Through collaboration with the students, the teacher developed a series of strategy wall charts. Students

were encouraged to use these charts whenever they encountered difficulties in reading. “Problem-Solution” and “Response Conferences” allowed students to share their difficulties in reading. Over the year, students became much more aware of how to both talk about strategies, and how to use strategies which was reflected in both their reading and writing activities. In another investigation of reading strategies involving younger learners, sixty-seven fifth and sixth grade students participated in a study by Dole, Brown, & Trathen (1996). The authors compared a teacher-directed strategy in which teachers read prepared scripts designed to activate prior knowledge with interactive instruction in which students and teachers together activated and discussed students' prior knowledge before reading. Results indicated that at risk readers who received strategy instruction made superior gains in comprehension performance over their peers who received story content or traditional basal instruction. Other studies have also shown that reading strategy instruction leads to improved comprehension overall (Brown & Palincsar, 1985; Hansen 1981 ; Hansen & Pearson, 1983)

From the above discussion, it is clear that reading strategy instruction improves readers' comprehension of specific texts, specifically texts that are less familiar or somewhat challenging to readers. A growing body of research suggests that strategy instruction is indeed beneficial and should be a requirement in all areas of literacy learning. In general, these studies support the notion that students can be taught to use strategies, and that strategy use increases students' awareness of their own performance as they read. Overall, comprehension can be improved by teaching students to monitor the process of comprehending - that is by helping students become aware of where they get information to answer questions in a text (Garner, 1987, Pressley et al., 1989; Pressley et al., 1992).

Considering the beneficial effects of reading strategy instruction in improving reading comprehension, it becomes important to define some of the essential components of an effective reading program. In other words, reading strategy instruction can be operationalized in the classroom by creating a well-designed reading program consisting of specific elements. The following discussion will therefore outline some of these components which will set the stage for students to be interested in and to succeed at reading. The following discussion will present some general principles of reading strategy instruction and I will point to my own practices in the classroom to further illustrate these principles.

The following discussion relates to my experience of teaching an advanced group of ESL adult learners involved in an eleven-week ESL Adult Academic Program in Western Canada. This class was essentially a literacy class, however tasks were varied and included reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities. When I began to assign students reading exercises with comprehension questions, I soon realized that students were extremely “dictionary dependent.” Most of the students in this class were

of Chinese and Vietnamese background and interestingly enough they all had electronic dictionaries. In general, the students were very reluctant to read passages or stories without the security of their electronic dictionary. Every few sentences, they would search for a meaning of a word, yet often the word retrieved from their dictionary was inappropriate for the context. This in turn led to further frustration and confusion on part of the students. It was at that point that I realized that these students needed to re-learn how to read if they were going to benefit from their time in an eleven-week program.

Defining and Explaining Strategies

Firstly, it is essential that students learn what reading strategies are and how they can be used. While there is a great deal of literature on this topic, there are numerous ways to inform students about reading strategies. For example, in my own class, both I and my students brainstormed lists of reading strategies. We began by examining a folktale entitled “The Bear Who Stole the Chinook”. I specifically chose to work with this text in the initial stages, partly because it would become a part of their unit on their studies about Canada and Native American culture, but secondly, it was a text that students would be unfamiliar with, and therefore, it would help me to determine their strategy use on texts they were less familiar with. Furthermore, using this text would allow me to see how they coped with unfamiliar material they were reading. It is essential for teachers to recognize that when choosing a text for such purposes, it must be a complete whole with a beginning, middle, and end. While students should be unfamiliar with the text so that it is somewhat challenging, it should be somewhat familiar to them in terms of content and language. This particular story was about a poor, young orphan boy who lived in a village with some Native Indians. Because the warm wind, commonly referred to as the chinook in Western Canada, was stolen by the bear, the villagers were very cold. The young boy and his animal friends decided to get the chinook back from the bear and the story describes the adventurous events that take place in the process. We began by looking at the title and the pictures and I asked the students to tell me what they thought the story would be about and how they came to that conclusion. Students were expected to make use of the title and the illustrations. While some students were able to offer logical predictions and stated that the story would in fact be about a bear who stole the wind or chinook, others stated that it was about winter, or animals. Such predictions were based partly on the illustrations, but the title was completely overlooked. I also asked the students who the main character would be and they were further asked to explain and justify their responses. As a class we began to talk about the importance of using such information as pre-reading strategies. Students also came to understand that by doing so, they

would enter the text with particular expectations, and hence specific content schema for what the text may be about.

I then began by reading the first paragraph of the story and asked the students to summarize what happened up to that point in time. While some students offered clear summaries with main ideas, others were more scattered in their thoughts and provided each and every detail about the text. At that point we talked about summarizing and paraphrasing and the characteristics of each. Students were then asked to read to a predetermined point in the story, and then to predict what would happen next. We discussed each prediction and the feasibility of each one. Students were asked to explain their predictions and to point to information in the text that led them to make such a prediction. Predictions were compared until we were able to come to the most logical possibilities. At various points in the story, I also asked the students to stop and define a word. The use of a dictionary or other resources was not permitted in order to elicit other reading strategies that might be used on this task. In addition to providing the meaning of these words, students were asked to indicate how they determined the meaning of the words, ie. guessing, from the context of the sentence, familiarity to other words, etc. For example, one of the sentences was “The hunters could find no game at all.” In this context, the word “game” referred to animals that are hunted for food. While some students were able to determine the meaning from context, others stated they did not know the word, while others provided out-of-context definitions. One student, for example, said it was “something that is played like soccer.” We discussed the plausibility of the various definitions until there was general agreement overall. While the story was two pages in length, I used the first half with the whole group of students so that we could discuss reading strategies and they could be shown how to use them in a text.

At that point, both the students and I generated a class chart on the board of the various strategies one could use when reading. The word strategy was defined in simple terms as “something that the reader does when he/she does not understand a word or part of the text.” Students used their own terminology to describe what strategies they used when responding to my questions. I then used their terminology, refined it, and created a more thorough chart. Once the class chart was created, each student was given a reference handout to refer to or to use as they worked. It is important that teachers clearly explain each strategy and that each strategy is clearly defined indicating what the strategy is and how and when it can be used (Refer to Table I). As a group we discussed each strategy and what the language meant. While on first appearance, such a chart may appear to be complex, if students have a hand in developing such a classroom reference, they can better understand the language used. It is also essential that students

become familiar with such terminology so that there is consistency in the language used in the classroom when discussing reading and reading difficulties.

An important point to note from many of the reading studies, is that readers' behaviors are often simply described in terms of strategy type, such as "cognitive" or "metacognitive", but fail to take into account the description of the actual reading behavior of the student. Due to the number of different types of reading strategies revealed by these studies, I, along with the students' input, compiled a list of reading strategies that I consider to be both useful and essential to reading comprehension. This list is by no means intended to exhaust the domain of possible categories, but by describing both "Strategy Type," as indicated in the first column of Table I, and "Strategy Behavior," as denoted in the second column, I believe a more precise description of reading strategies that are employed by readers is made possible. Seven specific strategy types are identified which include, cognitive, compensation, memory, metacognitive, affective, social, and textual strategies. The strategy behaviors as described on this chart are specific to the domain of reading. For example, the metacognitive strategy type includes such strategy behaviors as monitoring (self-monitoring of one's own understanding, pronunciation while reading, etc.) and word recognition (recognizing what is important and not important and skipping those words or that information). As stated, Table I is by no means complete, but it does provide one with a clearer conceptualization of reading strategies and how they might be identified. As stated previously, this not only allows students to better understand what strategies are and how they are used, but students become familiar with and begin to use such language and terminology when talking to one another about their reading experiences and the reading process.

Table I: STSB Reading Strategies (Strategy Type+Strategy Behavior)

	STRATEGY TYPE	STRATEGY BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION
CPS	Cognitive	Paraphrasing/Summarizing	The reader rephrases content using different words but retains the same sense.
CAP	Cognitive	Anticipating/Predicting	The reader predicts what content will occur in succeeding portions of the text.
CPT	Cognitive	Previewing Text	The reader previews the text to see how it is organized and related to what they know.
CC	Cognitive	Employing Context Clues	The reader uses clues in the story in order to make predictions or increase understanding.
CRW	Cognitive	Repeating Words	The reader repeats unknown words.
CA	Cognitive	Analyzing	The reader analyzes word structure, grammatical structures or expressions to determine the meanings of these words/sentences/expressions.
CWD	Cognitive	Word Division	The reader divides the words into parts to make it comprehensible.
CI	Cognitive	Using Illustrations	The reader uses illustrations/graphs, etc. in order to facilitate understanding of the text.
CT	Cognitive	Using Titles	The reader uses titles/headings to facilitate understanding of the text.
CCN	Cognitive	Using Connectors	The reader uses connectors to identify continuing ideas.
CR	Cognitive	Rereading	The reader rereads parts of a text several times in order to facilitate comprehension.
CGH	Compensation	Guessing/Hypothesizing	The reader guesses the general meaning of a word by using context clues.
MA	Memory	Associating	The reader creates an association between new material and what is already known.
MWG	Memory	Word Grouping	The reader places the new words in a group with other similar known words to determine meaning.
MWA	Memory	Word Associating	The reader associates a word with a known word in order to determine meaning.
MFL	Memory	First Language Associating-Cognates	The reader remembers a new word by identifying it with a word in their first language.
MM	Metacognitive	Monitoring	The reader self-monitors their own understanding/pacing/pronunciation of words.
MC	Metacognitive	Correcting Errors	The reader tries to correct their language/reading errors.
MWR	Metacognitive	Word Recognition	The reader is able to recognize unknown words by repeating them.
MRI	Metacognitive	Recognizing/Important	The reader recognizes what is important and not important and can skip those words or information
AF	Affective	Self-Encouragement	The reader makes encouraging statements to his/herself and pays attention to factors that may interfere with performance or comprehension.
SC	Social	Clarifying	The reader asks for clarification when something is not understood.
SV	Social	Verifying	The reader asks for verification that something has been understood or said correctly.
SF	Social	Seeking Feedback.	The reader asks other for feedback about his or reading, responses, etc.
TR	Textual	Reacting to Text	The reader can react to a text and express opinions about the text and characters.
TI	Textual	Interpreting Text	The reader draws a conclusion about the text in terms of theme or interpretation of text.
TE	Textual	Emotional Reaction	The reader reacts emotionally to the text.

Direct Strategy Instruction

Once students are familiar with reading strategies and what they involve, teacher-directed instruction is essential if students are to use strategies appropriately and effectively. As Pearson & Dole (1987) point out, explicit instruction involves four phases; teacher modeling and explanation of a strategy, guided practice during which teachers gradually give students more responsibility for task completion, independent practice and feedback, and application of the strategy practice in real reading situations. Once strategies have been explained and defined, teachers can demonstrate how to apply each strategy successfully and how and why it is used. I often use a think-aloud procedure as I read passages in class so that my students become familiar with how to use strategies when they encounter difficult words or phrases for example. Modeling the mental process as one reads can be very effective in teaching students how to read successfully and efficiently. As teachers and students work together, teachers should provide feedback to students about students' attempts at strategy use, and why they were successful or less successful in comprehending various parts of a text. In giving feedback on students' reading comprehension performance, teachers should focus on processes more than product, but still emphasizing the relationship between the two, since that will enable readers to better understand how effectively they can control their learning. As discussed above, by introducing a text in this manner and by working with the class as a whole, students can begin to understand how they can use strategies effectively.

Individual Practice

Once the students in my class came to understand what strategies were and how they were used through my explanations, class discussions, and the modeling and guided practice I provided, I felt it was essential for them to engage in individual practice. It was important to use the same text in order for them to remain in the same frame of mind initially. I wanted the students to go through the whole process of understanding and practicing strategy use while working on the same reading task. I then worked with students individually on various class days and had students complete the entire reading task (Appendix A). While I acknowledge that working individually with students can be difficult in large classes, it can be an extremely worthwhile process for both the teacher and student, and can set the stage for what happens in the classroom from that point on in terms of what students learn and how they begin to see reading as a process of meaning-making that they have control over. This particular class was three hours long each session so I was able to pull out students for 30 minutes at a time while the others were working on assignments.

The reading comprehension task was administered to each student individually and each student was provided with a copy of the story and the related questions (Appendix A). The students were presented with the story and by this time they had seen it once before when we used part of it in the initial stages of discussion of what reading strategies were. The students had therefore seen questions 1-4 a week before this task. Because I did not want the task itself to interfere with their performance, it was necessary for them to have a copy of the text in front of them. Time was also not a factor and students could refer back to the text if needed, and could take their time answering the questions. Prior to reading the first section of the story, the subject was shown the title page of the story which consisted of various illustrations; however, the title itself was not visible. The student was asked to explain what they thought the story might be about, and why they thought so. The title of the story was then revealed to the student at which point the following questions were asked: Who do you think the main character is? What do you think the main character does in the story? What do you think will happen in the story? The subject was then asked to silently read the first page of the story. A series of questions proceeded the reading which subjects answered orally. What do you think will happen next? Why do you think that? What in the text leads you to believe that? Can you describe what has happened so far in the story from the beginning up to this point in time? The student was then asked to read the second half of the story silently. Following the reading, an additional set of questions followed pertaining to the reading. Question (5) asked the student to summarize the entire story in a few sentences. In Question (6) the student was presented with a number of vocabulary items taken from the story, and the student was asked to define these words. The use of a dictionary or other resources was not permitted in order to elicit other reading strategies that may be used on such a task. In addition to providing the meaning of these words, students were asked to indicate how they determined the meanings of the words, ie. guessing, from the context, familiarity to other words, etc. The final section of the task asked students to answer a series of comprehension questions to determine their overall understanding of the story. All questions were asked and answered orally and the entire procedure was audio-recorded.

Once all the students had completed the recordings, I analyzed each tape to determine the students strengths and weaknesses. Through the responses to the comprehension questions and vocabulary items, I was able to determine which strategies were being used and those that were not being used. I used a Reading Checklist designed specifically for this task to make points on which both I and the student could refer to (Appendix B). By the end of week two, I had compiled information on each student in regards to this text and their strategy use. In week three, I played one student's reading on the tape out loud for the class and we analyzed it together as a group. This was an extremely useful process as it once again

modeled the reading process and what readers do and do not do when reading. It is important; however, to use a recording of a student from another class and furthermore, the name of that individual must be kept confidential. By doing so, students in the class will not feel as though their performance is being criticized by their peers. We then went through all of the questions (Appendix A) and listened to the student's responses. Students were given a copy of the Reading Checklist and completed information as we discussed the student's responses to the questions. The students noted the correct responses to the comprehension and vocabulary questions as we discussed them in detail. The entire class period was devoted to this activity and by the end, many of the students in the class were engaged in conversation with each other about what the reader had not done and should have done given the information in the text.

On the next class period, I divided students into groups of four and they had an opportunity to work on their tapes in the group. Once again each student was given a copy of the Reading Checklist and it was completed by each student when they heard their group member's tape. I spent time moving from group to group to ensure that the task was being completed appropriately, and that their discussions were moving in the right direction. As students worked in groups, they began to carefully analyze student interpretations and responses to the text. This activity allowed the students to talk about the strategies they were, or were not using when reading. Furthermore, students heard about one another's reasoning process and learned about both less effective and more effective strategic readers. The students also benefited and learned from hearing the various personal interpretations of texts and how they were reached. Moreover, students felt free to participate to a greater degree in these group discussions which is often not possible in larger group settings. In addition to opportunities for peer and collaborative learning, I observed students taking turns to teach each other. Also, because students had become familiar with the terminology and language used to discuss the reading process, they were beginning to dialogue and participate in effective discussions about what they do as readers. There are numerous variations to this type of guided practice; for example, Retrospective Miscue Analysis allows students to discuss their miscues which are recorded by the teacher (Goodman, 1996). Such activities also allow students to evaluate their own performance (Pearson and Dole, 1987).

Individualized Strategy Instruction and Strategy Practice

It is important to note that in order for strategy instruction to be most effective, it requires some individualization. Not all readers are successful readers, nor do they use strategies in the same way. Readers therefore have different strengths and weaknesses and in order for strategy instruction to be

maximally effective, these strengths and weaknesses must be identified. Because I had audio-recorded each student's performance on the story, and also had a written record of their performance, I was able to determine what their strengths and weaknesses were. For example, one student was a fairly proficient reader but consistently left the word endings off past tense and plural verbs. He also paid little attention to punctuation breaks which interfered with his overall comprehension. Another student appeared not to use context clues when providing the meanings of words as most of her definitions were completely out of context. By assessing students' reading abilities, training can be provided on how to improve those abilities, and the use of reading strategies. Such assessment can also provide valuable information that can guide instructional practice in the classroom.

Once a student's strengths and weaknesses have been identified and a teacher has obtained an accurate profile of a student's reading ability, the teacher and student can work together to create a reading program or strategy lessons that will allow the reader to improve his/her reading skills. Although teachers use a variety of different types of strategy and reading lessons in the classroom, Goodman, Watson, and Burke (1996) present a comprehensive series of reading strategy lessons organized around the evaluated needs of students that can be incorporated into the classroom. Such lessons can serve as prototypes or can be modified for specific purposes. Before implementing strategy lessons; however, two important points must be considered. Regardless of the strategy lessons to be used, the content of the strategy lesson must be taken into account. Teachers must use caution in implementing such strategy lessons when the content of such lessons is of little interest to their readers. When students are interested in the content, it provides them with the motivation and purpose to read. Second, reading strategy lessons are most effective when they are used at critical teaching moments. When a teacher becomes aware of a student's specific problem or area of difficulty, appropriate materials for a strategy lesson can be selected at that point, which will directly support the student and those difficulties. For example, for the student that was deleting letters from word endings, specifically verbs, lessons similar to the following were provided.

A New Artist in New York by S. Shaw

A wonderful new show of paintings open-----in New York last week. Maria Diamond, the artist, is new to New York. She is not new to art. She grew up in Mexico and spent most of her life there. She stud(y)-----with several famous artists in Mexico City. Five years ago she marr(y)--- Ted Diamond and they move-----to Italy. While they were liv(e)-----in Italy, she was quite popular. She also won several important awards.

Ms. Diamond is a small, very quiet person. But her painting-----are very large. They are full of color and excitement. She explain-----that the colors she uses are Mediterranean colors. In the Mediterranean area the sky and the sea are usually very bright blue. The house---are often pink, yellow, or orange.

In her paintings, the excitement comes partly from these color----- . It also comes from her style. She likes to paint large shapes that seem to move. Ms. Diamond's paintings do not show us the real world. Instead they show us her feelings about the world. We look forward to seeing more work from this young and very fine artist.

One way to encourage this particular student to read the verbs as written, was to provide a story with carefully selected words that were deleted. The base form of the verb was provided although it is not necessary. By paying attention to the meaning and context of the story, he was able to gradually provide the correct form of the verb. Because he also turned plural nouns into singular ones by deleting the final "s", such examples were also employed in the same exercise, although separate exercises can be created for each specific kind of deletion. Following this lesson, I and the student talked about his reading and discussed the problems he experienced. For instance, I asked him the following questions:

1. How did you know what to put in the blanks?
2. Let's go through each example and you can explain how you determined the right word.
3. Can you give more than one answer for some of the blanks? Where?

This brief discussion concerning the strategy lesson procedure and how the student decided on the appropriate word form helped him to become more confident about his reading. He realized that he could complete deletions correctly and also became aware of how this lesson could help him with specific kinds of miscues. In this sense, the student helped to build meaning for himself, and make meaning from the text. Once students have been taught various reading strategies and have been shown how and when to use them effectively, they must be provided with ample opportunity to practice the skills and strategies important to proficient reading. Just as one needs practice in learning any new skill, readers need practice in reading skills. Furthermore, as Fielding (1994) points out, reading results in greater knowledge which leads to more background knowledge, which in turn fuels the comprehension process. While it is difficult to determine exactly how much time should be devoted to such practice, it is clear that sufficient time is needed for reading if students are to benefit from what they have been taught.

Strategy Use and Text Selection

In order to be able practice strategy use effectively, readers must use caution when selecting texts. Often when I allowed students to make their own selection of reading materials, they chose texts that were too simple, which did not allow them to fully use the repertoire of strategies available to them. While student choice is important in terms of interest and motivation, teachers can monitor students and their text selections to ensure that texts chosen are not too difficult or too easy, but rather of optimal difficulty. Monitoring students' text selection can also enable teachers to expose students to a variety of

readings, genres, and rhetorical patterns which can allow students to practice strategy use in different settings. As we continued to work together in this class, my students were gradually exposed to all kinds of texts which differed in content, language (technical or non-technical texts, fiction or nonfiction), and textual and rhetorical format. We examined short stories from English literature, newspaper and magazine articles, texts from psychology, sociology, expository texts from physics, and a number of other materials. I wanted students to realize that different types of texts have different features and by becoming familiar with such features they can approach the reading of such texts differently, while at the same time, make use of the various reading strategies that were available to them. Allowing students to practice strategy use with diverse texts exposes students to the different styles of texts and various problems they may encounter in such readings.

Conclusion

It is clear that strategy training in reading leads to improvement in reading comprehension. Classroom instruction has the potential to influence a range of skills including reading, to which strategies can be applied. Reading teachers must therefore go beyond their traditional roles by providing opportunities in which students can become familiar with and apply strategies that are appropriate to activities and skills being presented. Teachers need to be concerned about improving students' comprehension ability rather than just their comprehension which requires the teaching of strategic reading behaviors. Teachers can encourage students to share their own reading experiences with other students. Talking about what is understood or not understood can allow readers to share knowledge and effective reading strategies. Teachers can also directly model effective reading strategy behavior which can lead to improved reading and reading comprehension. By consciously making students aware of strategy use to improve reading comprehension, students can learn and read more effectively. Reflecting on own teaching experiences with my ESL students and their "prized electronic dictionaries," I no longer view that experience as a challenge, but rather as a teaching goal. Learning to use strategies effectively requires that learners perceive the goals of their behavior. In order for readers to understand what they are doing, they need to know why it is being done. Learners need to perceive strategy use as a means to a personal end or such behavior will not become part of their successful reading experience. While the course was only eleven weeks in length, I believe these students took with them a learning tool which will be forever useful to them. I continue to engage in this process as I teach, and over the term have seen my students grow into effective, active, thinking readers. Effective delivery of strategy instruction, and student knowledge of the *whats* and *whys* are the first step in assisting students in becoming better

readers. I believe strategy instruction, as part of a balanced literacy program can create successful, independent readers who choose to read.

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Appendix A: Reading Task - The Bear Who Stole the Chinook

Please answer the following questions. As explained, your responses will be recorded.

1. By looking at the title page of the story, can you tell me what you think the story is about? How do you know? (2 marks)

(Title of the story is not visible).

2. Who do you think the main character is? (1 mark)

(Title of the story is revealed to the student)

What do you think the main character does in the story? (1 mark)

What do you think will happen in the story? (1 mark)

Please read the first page of the story.

You have read the first half of the story. Please answer the following questions.

3. What do you think will happen next? (1 mark)

Why do you think that? (1 mark)

4. Tell me what has happened in the story from the beginning up to this point in time? (5 marks)

Please read the second half of the story.

You have read the entire story. Please answer the following questions.

5. If you had to tell someone what the story was about, what would you say? How would you summarize the story? (5 marks)

6. Please tell me the meanings of these words/phrases. (After providing a definition for each word, indicate how you came up with the definitions). (2 marks each)

Paragraph 1: shivered, lodges, game, ragged (How do you know?)

Paragraph 2: gossip (How do you know?)

Paragraph 3: fastened (How do you know?)

Paragraph 4: council of war, scout, snarled savagely, den (How do you know?)

Paragraph 6: fierce (How do you know?)

Paragraph 7: untie, seized, dragged (How do you know?)

Paragraph 8: splashed (How do you know?)

Paragraph 9: recapture, dreadfully cross (How do you know?)

Comprehension Questions: Please answer the following questions.

1. What were the weather conditions like in the story? (1 mark)

2. Why couldn't the hunters find any food? (1 mark)

3. Who are the animals in the story? (must name at least 3) (3 marks)

4. Why did the animals ask the magpie about the chinook? (1 mark)

5. According the story, why do owls have big eyes? (1 mark)

6. How was the chinook finally set free? (1 mark)

7. Why did the bear steal the chinook?

Did he do the right thing? Why or why not (2 marks)

8. Did you like the story? Why or why not? (1 mark)

9. Did this story remind you of anything, anyone, or any specific event? (1 mark)

You have completed the Reading Comprehension Task.

Appendix B: Reading Checklist

STRATEGY BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	YES	NO	COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS
Paraphrasing Summarizing	The reader rephrases content using different words but retains the same sense.	✓		<i>Sometimes the reader can summarize but often too many details are provided which are not needed. Summaries have a beginning, middle and end.</i>
Anticipating Predicting	The reader predicts what content will occur in succeeding portions of the text.	✓		<i>yes and predictions are plausible - they make sense given the story line.</i>
Previewing Text	The reader previews the text to see how it is organized and related to what they know.		✓	<i>Reader does not look over the text in its entirety before reading</i>
Employing Context Clues	The reader uses clues in the story in order to make predictions or increase understanding.	✓		<i>yes, reader often uses the sentences in the story to help with word meanings. He knew for example the word "game" referred to animals and not a sport.</i>
Repeating Words	The reader repeats unknown words.		✓	<i>not observed</i>
Analyzing	The reader analyzes word structure, grammatical structures or expressions to determine the meanings of these words/sentences/expressions.	✓		<i>Reader does pay attention to expressions because overall comprehension is good. Reader does not read word endings though.</i>
Word Division	The reader divides the words into parts to make it comprehensible.	✓		<i>"untie" - the reader said the prefix means "not" so the word is "not to tie"</i>
Using Illustrations	The reader uses illustrations/graphs, etc. in order to facilitate understanding of the text.	✓		<i>The reader used illustrations because he said the story would be about winter and a bear.</i>
Using Titles	The reader uses titles/headings to facilitate understanding of the text.	✓		<i>Titles are used because the reader said the bear will steal the chinook.</i>
Using Connectors	The reader uses connectors to identify continuing ideas.		✓	<i>not observed</i>
Rereading	The reader rereads parts of a text several times in order to facilitate comprehension.		✓	<i>not observed</i>
Guessing Hypothesizing	The reader guesses the general meaning of a word by using context clues.	✓		<i>The reader does guess. Very rarely does he say he does not know the meaning of a word.</i>
Associating	The reader creates an association between new material and what is already known.	✓		<i>yes because he said he heard the word lodge before and he thought it meant a small house.</i>

Word Grouping	The reader places the new words in a group with other similar known words to determine meaning.		✓	<i>not observed</i>
Word Associating	The reader associates a word with a known word in order to determine meaning.		✓	<i>not observed</i>
First Language Associating-Cognates	The reader remembers a new word by identifying it with a word in their first language.	✓		<i>Yes, from Spanish classes, he knew the word "fiera" means the same as "fierce"</i>
Monitoring	The reader self-monitors their own understanding/pacing/pronunciation of words.		✓	<i>Not pronunciation or pacing. Word endings are deleted. Punctuation marks are ignored.</i>
Correcting Errors	The reader tries to correct their language/reading errors.		✓	<i>No</i>
Word Recognition	The reader is able to recognize unknown words by repeating them.		✓	<i>not observed</i>
Recognizing Important	The reader recognizes what is important and not important and can skip those words or information		✓	<i>not observed</i>
Self-Encouragement	The reader makes encouraging statements to his/herself and pays attention to factors that may interfere with performance or comprehension.		✓	<i>The reader stated that he was not confident about his oral reading and that overall, he did not consider himself to be a good reader.</i>
Clarifying	The reader asks for clarification when something is not understood.	✓		<i>Yes, often</i>
Verifying	The reader asks for verification that something has been understood or said correctly.	✓		<i>Yes</i>
Seeking Feedback.	The reader asks others for feedback about his or reading, responses, etc.	✓		<i>Yes</i>
Reacting to Text	The reader can react to a text and express opinions about the text and characters.	✓		<i>The reader stated that the bear did a terrible thing by stealing the chinook and making the people suffer all winter long.</i>
Interpreting Text	The reader draws a conclusion about the text in terms of theme or interpretation of text.	✓		<i>The reader stated that the authors was trying to teach others to be generous and not selfish.</i>
Emotional Reaction	The reader reacts emotionally to the text.	✓		<i>The reader stated that he liked the text because it taught a lesson and that is an important part of any story.</i>

Additional Comments:

Overall, W's reading was quite good. He was able to use context clues much of the time to determine the meanings of words. If the meaning of a word, was not known, he simply guessed. He was not afraid to guess the meanings of words

and therefore I would describe him as a risk taker. Where possible, he tried to make connections to words he previously knew. He used titles and illustrations effectively. He did not, however, read the word endings on many verbs, nor the plural endings. He also did not pay attention to his oral reading as he simply ignored punctuation marks. This seemed to interfere with his comprehension at times. Lessons in this area may be useful. Some reading behaviors were not observed which may have been due to the task, or perhaps they were simply not part of his strategy use. His reading behavior will continue to be observed in the classroom on other tasks. Overall, reading score on this task was 76%.

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