

Learning strategies

Lec. 3 \ fourth stage \ English department

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Reading comprehension : is understanding a text that is read, or the process of "constructing meaning" from a text. Comprehension is a "construction process" because it involves all of the elements of the reading process working together as a text is read to create a representation of the text in the reader's mind.

Reading comprehension is the process of readers interacting meaning from text by implementing the prior knowledge and the information found in the text.

Level of Comprehension

San Antonio College (2006: 11) divided the levels of comprehension into four levels as:

- 1- Literal level: Stated facts-Data- Specifics-Traits-Setting-Timeline/process steps.
- 2- Inferential level: Builds on facts: prediction-Drawing conclusions-perceiving meaning.
- 3- Evaluative level: Judgment based on; Reality or Fantasy, Fact or Opinion, Validity- Appropriateness-Worth: acceptable, desirable ideas-comparisons - Cause-Effect.
- 4- Appreciative level: Response based on; Author's use language .Emotional reaction to author's ideas, language-Author's values-imagery, Style-Author's purpose.

The objectives of teaching comprehension lesson

The objectives of teaching a comprehension lesson are:

- to enable the pupils to understand the ideas inherent in the linguistic fabric of the lesson (a piece of writing or passage)
- to enable them to recall, analyze and classify the ideas expressed in the passage
- to enable them to understand contextual meanings of lexical items and structures fitted into the build-up of the passage
- to enable them to understand the usage of lexical and structures involved
- to enable their penchant for reading with understanding.

Factors Influencing Reading

1-Physiological Factors

Various Physical deficiencies cause reading disability. Visual, auditory, speech impairments and neurological status are some physical deficiencies, which cause reading disability.

2-Sociological Factors

Language background depends on the extent of experience. Though the school can do much in the matter of language background and general experiences with speech and vocabulary, reading ability is a concomitant of home conditions. There is a close relation between reading and social factors. Home background can include -

- 1) economic condition.
- 2) opportunities for play and for social experiences.
- 3) nature and amount of speech and language patterns of children particularly as they are influenced by the talk of the parents
- 4) amount of reading done in the home and the availability of books.
- 5) quality of family life in terms of inter-parental relationships.

3-The Psychological Factors

Reading is an interpretation of graphic symbols. It is the identification of the symbols and the association of appropriate meanings with them. Reading involves an interaction between the writer and the reader. The reader interprets what he reads, associates it with his past experience,

and projects beyond it in terms of ideas, relations and categorization. Therefore the psychological factors such as (Interest , Intelligence , Reading readiness , Attitude towards reading , Cognitive style etc .) may influence the reading competence of the pupils.

5- Teacher Related Factors

Reading is a complex process made of many interrelated skills and abilities. Success in teaching children to read depends on the teacher. The teacher who is inept because of poor training, lack of experience or a slavish devotion to inflexible routine, is unable to adjust reading instruction to the varied needs of the students.

Models of Reading comprehension

1- Bottom-up Theory

reading is seen as a linear process in which letters are identified one by one and then converted to sounds; each letter is held in the memory until the next letter is identified; when words are recognized, they, too, are held in the memory until the meaning of the sentence and eventually the paragraph is understood; the reader is seen as a passive decoder. Comprehension happens when phonemic processing is rapid and efficient, however, there is no need for or effect of prior knowledge. Readers are expected to read all words in the text in order to achieve comprehension.

such linear models have a serious deficiency because they “pass information along in one direction only and do not permit the information contained in a higher stage to influence the processing of a lower stage” . Moreover a serious deficiency of the bottom up theory is the lack of feedback “ in that no mechanism is provided to allow for processing stages which occur later in the system to influence processing which occurs earlier in the system. Furthermore, such models do not explain why the reading process is not affected by context or prior knowledge. In addition to these shortcomings, the bottom up theory “lacks flexibility. The reader has no choice of operations or strategies to deploy in different reading tasks”.

2- Top-down models

Top-down models, as we will see, start with higher levels of cognitive processes by making predictions and assumptions and then trying to confirm or reject them by working down to the printed text. The model that best represents the top down theory is Goodman's psycholinguistic model of reading (1970). He believes that reading is meaning oriented: readers bring their knowledge and experience when they read. They sample, select from the text and make assumptions and predictions based on cues from letters, words, and syntax, and while they read they accept or reject their predictions by using their knowledge and experience that they had from the beginning.

Goodman's model has received some criticism. For example, the model does not give enough details about the reading process. Also, most of Goodman's work was with children, who have different reading strategies from adults. And one of the shortcomings of the top down model is that "for many texts, the reader has little knowledge of the topic and cannot generate predictions".

3- Interactive Theory

Stanovich(1980) was one of the researchers who succeeded in combining both bottom up and top down theories in a new model. According to Stanovich's model, reading involves a number of processes. Readers who are weak in one process will rely on other processes to compensate for the weaker one. For example, a poor reader who is slow and inaccurate at word identification (bottom up) but knows a lot about the text subject will overcome his or her weakness by relying on his or her knowledge (top down). Thus, the Stanovich model is interactive in the sense that any process, regardless of its position, may communicate (interact) with any other process in order to achieve comprehension.