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Monitoring Text Design

Levels: Intermediate+
Aims: Enable students to develop strategies for recognizing and preparing lagging comprehension
Class Time: 50 minutes
Preparation Time: 15-20 minutes
Resources: One or two textbook sections or magazine articles

Think-aloud strategies encourage students to assume control of comprehension monitoring. BY learning to concentrate on theme, organization and signal words, students can retrace and figure out where break-down in their comprehension occur.

Procedure:
1. Locate a suitable reading text and bring a class set to the lesson.
2. Give students time to read through the passage silently, then think aloud your procedure for comprehending the passage, highlighting difficult or ambiguous text. Return to unwieldy text as necessary.
3. Talk aloud from the beginning of the passage, predicting thematic focus in the text from the title of the passage.
4. Look for initial, within-body, and final mentions of the thematic focus highlighting key words and ideas.
5. Note text sections with potentially important changes in the controlling idea.
6. Try to identify any predominant rhetorical clustering of information such as process descriptions presented as sequences, comparisons or contrasts presented as hierarchies or matrices, or even cause-effects or problem-solution patterns.
7. Actively search for combinations of patterns or incomplete patterns.
8. Describe the textual signals that you noted, such as the introduction conclusion, and headings as cues for repairing misunderstood text.
9. Ask one or a pair of the more proficient students to model these monitoring strategies on a different passage. As students work repeatedly on this think-aloud procedure, their remarks will become more refined approximations of their thinking and understanding of text design.
The Art of Reading Comprehension

Levels: Intermediate+
Aims: Help students understand vocabulary in context; encourage students to monitor their own comprehension
Class Time: 1-2 hours
Preparation Time: 1-2 hours
Resources: Any appropriate text Illustrations from art books

This technique requires the reader to apply meaning from the text to the actual content to which it refers. The correct responses are pictures not further text. This means that it is impossible to choose a correct response simply on the basis of linguistics cues. It also is particularly stimulating for those students who are visually (rather than print) oriented in terms of learning style.

Procedure:
1. Choose a text that describes an artistic tradition, find illustrations and make reading questions.
2. Using pictures, preteach key vocabulary, for example,: landscape scenery, brushstroke, figure, portrait, still-life.
3. Arrange a number of reproductions of Chinese paintings in random order, for example, along the chalkboard ledge.
4. Ask hypothesis questions, for example, which paintings do you think are oldest? Latest?
5. Read introductory paragraph together, finding examples of vocabulary words in the paintings.
6. Have students read the entire passage (see Appendix below).
7. Ask students to match pictures with the dynasty, stating reasons supported by the text. Which of these pictures could have been painted by Yen Li-Pen? By Han Kan? Why do you think so? Ask student painted by Yen Li-Pen? By Han Kan? Why do you think so? Ask student to identify dynasty, style, and artists based on information in the text.

Caveats and Options
1. Use any sequence in an artistic tradition, for example, from French late classical to Impressionists and early Post-Impressionists. This can also be done horizontally, with different contemporaneous styles, for example, to identify African tribal or regional styles.
2. Chinese students may recognize the paintings, artists and dynasties but not know the English vocabulary. The assignment can be revised for them to start with the paintings, and then find appropriate descriptive language in the text.
Appendix: Sample Excerpt

The Tang dynasty (618-906 A.D.) saw the rise of the great art of Chinese landscape painting. Jutting peaks, reaching into the sky, were carefully detailed with trees, rocks, and streams in brilliant greens and blue. Virtually nothing now remains of the work of such famous masters of this period as Yen Li-Pen, Wu Tao-tzu, Tung Yuan, and Wang Wei. During this same period, figure painting, especially of historical and courtly scenes, reached a peak of excellence. People were portrayed with strength and magnificence unequaled in later Chinese painting. Animals were also frequent subjects during this time. Han Kan, the 8th century artist is particularly famous for his paintings of horses. Although stylized made with only a few brushstrokes, their simple strong lines have great energy.

Sharply diminishes in scale, the human figure did not intrude upon the magnificence of nature. Zen Buddhists' paintings were often sparked by an intuitive vision with rapid brushstrokes and ink splashes, they created works of vigor and spontaneity.

Many landscapes of this period are misty and dream-like; they seem clam even sad, or constantly shifting and changing.
Steppingstones to Reading Instruction

Levels: intermediate+, Secondary ESL
Aims: Encourage and develop correct inferences in reading
Class Time: 10 min. +
Resources: Any reading text; Preparation Time: None

Students, especially those who are unaccustomed to interactive classroom, are often reluctant to respond to inference questions during class discussion, either because they lack confidence and do not want to risk embarrassment, or because they are unsure of the answer and require additional information in order shape their realization of a concept or idea. Teachers can encourage and facilitate responses in both instances by offering students hints and choices. These serve as steppingstones that enable students to advance towards a correct inference.

Procedure
1. Focus on a small portion of text. This example uses an excerpt from Lewis Carroll’s poem “Jabberwocky”:
   Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
   The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
2. Pose the comprehension-inference question, for example, What is a Jabberwock? (The desirable answer is anything like “a fierce dangerous animal.”)
3. If students do not respond, give a hint or a choice. Often, one such steppingstone will be sufficient, but you can put as many steppingstones as necessary to help students come up with the right answer and vocabulary.
   Hints include the use of leading questions, statements, and nonverbal cues that can move ahead of student development to help shape a correct inference. Nonverbal cues, such as gestures, facial expressions, and sounds can also often expedite a realization. Examples:
   • Leading question: Would you like to have one in your house? Do people have claws?
   • Statement: It’s some kind of animal.
   • Nonverbal hint: claw the air threateningly, make a fierce face roar
4. Especially recommended are leading questions with obvious negative answers, such as Would you like to have one in your house? Which evoke laughter and comic protest. Nonverbal hints also tend to evoke laughter and lower affective barriers.
   Choices involve the presentation of possible answers, usually in pairs. A choice may include: (a) one very likely possible choice and one very unlikely choice; (b) two unlikely choices; (c) two likely choices;
   a. Is it friendly or unfriendly? A good thing or a dangerous thing?
   b. Is it a mouse or a butterfly?
   c. Is it an animal or a demon?

Especially recommended is choice type a. unlikely choice, when paired with a likely choice, is usually obviously to the students and evokes laughter or smiles of rejection. This gives students a chance to make a very safe choice, and get credit for moving along the path to the right answer.
Appendix.

“Jabberwocky” is a famous poem of nonsense verse, with made-up words (nonce words, neologisms, nonsense words) by Lewis Carroll.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! and through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.
Main Ideas

Do-It-Yourself Materials
Levels: Lower intermediate+
Aims: Practice reading authentic texts
Class Time: 20 minutes
Preparation Time: 30 minutes
Resources: Brochures from supermarkets, department stores, government agencies, political groups

Students need to be able to make sense of public information resources independently. This activity uses brochures on any number of topics that might be of interest or use to them.

Procedure:
1. Locate suitable brochures. If your class is interested in current events you might use an informational pamphlet from a group such as Amnesty International. Alternatively, you can find informational pamphlets about food at the supermarket or those relating to health issues through doctors’ offices or public agencies.
2. Most brochures follow a question-and-answer format (e.g., what is Amnesty International?) or make extensive use of headlines and subtitles from the paragraphs they match.
3. Think up a preview question, getting the students to focus on the topic (What do you know about X? What would you like to known before you joined it?). Get answers from the whole class.
4. Put the students in groups and ask them to match the titles and paragraphs.
5. As a comprehension check, ask the students, in groups, to list two or three facts they learned about the topic.
What’s in the News?

Levels: Intermediate+
Aims: Practice reading authentic texts from newspapers
Class Time: 50 minutes
Preparation Time: 20 minutes
Resources: Short articles from English-language newspapers

Recognizing the main idea and themes in newspaper articles helps readers process retain information on current events. Reading authentic articles also gives learners appropriate background knowledge for related class projects.

Procedure:
1. Ask each student to bring an article from an English language newspaper on a common topic (e.g. crime, pollution, accidents).
2. In class, put students in groups of three or four and have them retell their information, classifying it into specific categories (e.g. homicide, robbery, assault).
3. Next, have students walk around the room and find out who else has articles that match their own categories.
4. After groups with similar categories are formed, direct a whole-class discussion to make a list of all the categories on the board. Students can contribute additional information from their own experiences.
5. Post-reading activities requiring writing can be assigned, such as summaries, letters to government officials offering suggestions to deal with problems, and responses in journals.
Piecing Together Ideas

Levels: Intermediate+
Aims: Practice reading for main ideas
Class Time: 20-30 minutes
Preparation Time: No set time
Resources: Any reading material; Paper; Hat

Making distinctions between general ideas and supporting details is an important part of reading comprehension. Strip stories are an enjoyable way for students to see the relationship between the bigger and smaller pieces of a text.

Procedure:
1. Select appropriate reading material for the class.
2. Select sentences or paraphrase portions of the reading passage and write them on strips of paper. Prepare a set of corresponding strips that say either “main idea” or “supporting detail.” The two sets of strips must correspond exactly. The total number of strips should equal the number of students in the class.
3. As the students read the material, devote class time to enhancing comprehension until the material is well understood.
4. Have students
   - Draw a strip from a hat.
   - Work together to match the strips with the quotations to the strips with the labels.
   - Stand in a line (with a strip) in the order that the sentences appeared in the reading passage.
   - Read out loud, in sequence, what is written on the individual strip?

Caveats and Options
1. For a large class, use two sets of strips and have two groups form two different lines simultaneously.
2. Make the activity more difficult by requiring any reading material to be put away before the strips are drawn from the hat so students may not refer to it during the exercise.
3. It is important to have covered the material well before attempting this activity, but it is a nice way to conclude work on a reading passage.
Up Against the Wall

Levels: Any  
Aims: Practice reading for main ideas  
Class time: Varies, depending on length of reading passage  
Preparation Time: 50 minutes  
Resources: Suitable reading passage

In addition to helping students understand the main ideas of reading, this activity generates a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm as students get away from their desks and move around the room searching for answers to their questions.

Procedure:
1. Make up one question for each main idea of the reading passage. For beginning classes, these can be true/false, cloze with a choice, or multiple choice. For more fluent readers, the questions can be open ended (e.g. what, where, and so on). Duplicate the questions can be open every two students in the class will have one question.
2. Cut the passage into sections according to its paragraphs, Fasten the paragraph can be read easily by several people at the same time.
3. Place the students in pairs, and give each pair on question. (Depending on the size of the class, any number of pairs will have the same question.) Instruct the students to read paragraphs on the walls of the classroom until the find the answer to their question.
4. When they have returned to their seats, distribute copies of the complete reading passage and go over the answers. You might also want to pass out copies of all of the questions, making it easier for everyone to understand other groups’ questions.

Caveats and Options:
1. For more proficient readers, use questions that require students to make inferences.
2. Again, with more proficient readers, ask a question that cannot be answered by reading the passage.
3. To encourage more group work, have pairs with the same question discuss their answers before Step 4 above.
4. Use the activity as a prereading task.
Getting the Idea

Levels: Intermediate+
Aims: Reduce student dependency on a dictionary
Encourage student acceptance of uncertainty
Discourage excessive concern over the meaning of every word in a passage
Cultivate the habit of general reading in English

Class Time: 50 minutes
Resources: Any reading passage

A text does not always require a careful reading but even when it does focusing on overall meaning accelerates and enhances comprehension. Students need to discover for themselves the degree to which they are able to derive meaning from a text without understanding (or, in this case, actually seeing) every word in it, such a discover works toward promoting a general interest in reading in English.

Procedure:
1. Select a suitable passage and give it a title or heading if necessary. Replace main ideas with blank spaces (see Appendix below).
2. Divide the class into groups of four or five students and provide each student with a copy of the doctored passage.
3. Ask the students, working in groups, to examine the passage, discuss it, and then write group summaries of what they think the main idea(s) are.
4. Allow approximately 10 minutes for the students to complete the task, then collect the summaries and all copies of the text.
5. Provide each student with an undoctored copy of the passage. While the groups read it and then write a second summary, copy the collected summaries on the board.
6. Ask a student from each group to come to the board and copy the group’s new summary beneath the old one.
7. Ask the class as a whole to identify any differences, if any, between the summaries in each set and to discuss their significance. For example, do any changes in the second summary really add to an understanding of the main idea of the passage?
8. Have the class as a whole analyze all the groups’ summaries in term of any differences. Bring into this analysis the part played by the title in identifying the main idea of the passage. From this general discussion, the class should arrive at a summary acceptable to all participants.
9. Round off the exercise with a look at any unfamiliar words, Check if students have correctly inferred their meanings. Prompt further inference from context. Explain any words that remain elusive these words changes the gist of the text.

Caveats and Options
1. The whole or general meaning is contained in the parts of the passage the students first see and in the title, so the deleted words may provide details. Students can see, however, that they have little or no impact on the general meaning.
2. Without the frantic pursuit of word-to-word understanding implicit in intensive reading, students gain the confidence to employ the inference and prediction skills they have already learned and to accept uncertainty as normal.
The Beach Gets a New Look

The next generation will exclaim in amazement, “Imagine, in the olden days people used to actually lie in the sun to get a tan! Rapidly coming to an end are the days of beaches rainbow-hued with scattered gaudy towels and glistening with shiny, oily bodies that from a distance look like so much flotsam and jetsam washed up with the tide. The era of sunless tanning is upon us as manufacturers of sun-care products compete for the new market of consumers educated to the risk of skin cancer. Combined with the health fear is the temptation of a safe, fast tan that, fake as it may be, is a far cry from the streaky-carrot look that was a give-away in the past. Now the bottle-bronzed blend with the more traditional tanners to form the community of Sybarites crowding pool and beach as the temperature rises.

Advanced technology has allowed the development of a wide range of these new and improved sunless tanning products. Costs vary, but they are all basically the same. As with their predecessors, the active ingredient is DHA (dihydroxy-acetone), but the new products spread more evenly and produce a more natural-looking tan in two to three hours. Since the tan gradually fades in a few days, repeated applications are necessary to maintain that much sought after summer-glow. Needless to say such a booming market has manufacturers smiling.

Advanced technology is not, however, leaving the stubborn hanging out to dry in the sun unprotected. For those who cannot break their addiction to the sun’s deadly embrace, a new patch has joined the rush of patches with which we can now adorn our bodies. As harmful exposure to ultraviolet rays rises, the patch changes color to warn the inveterate sunbather of imminent danger.

So what will breaches of the future look like? Probably another colourful sea, but this time of shimmering parasols floating three or four feet above the sand with the sunlessly tanned huddled in their shade for protection. Anomalous squares of open sand harbouring the patched dissenters will stand out like fragile islands bracing for onslaught of a tidal wave.

Note: The parts in bold are all that students see at first.
Choosing a Different Title

Levels: high beginning+
Aims: Give students practice in distinguishing between main and supporting ideas
Class time: 20-25 minutes
Resources: Short news articles

This activity is a good way of getting students to realize that authors have many options to choose from in selecting a title and that the actual title used to reflect the taste or bias of the author or editor of the newspaper or magazine in which the article appears.

Procedure
1. Locate a suitable article from a newspaper or magazine. The article should have a title and be about 250-350 words long. Prepare a list of other titles for the article, 5 “good” titles (i.e., titles focus on the main idea of the article) and 5 “wrong” ones (i.e., distracted focusing on supporting details). You will need one copy of the topic and one list of titles for each student.
2. Distribute the article and the list of titles. Divide the class into pairs.
3. Tell the students that they are to read the title of the article and the article itself. Then they are to look at the list of titles and choose more that are also good. They should number the titles from 1 to 5, starting with the one they think is best.
4. Have students work in pairs, choosing and ranking 5 titles.
5. (Optional) Have one student from each pair report to the class.

Caveats and Options
1. As a variation, remove the original title from the article and include it among the titles on the list. Have students guess which title was actually used by the author.
2. As an additional step, ask students to say what is wrong with the other titles in the list.
3. Another option is to have the entire class vote on what they think is the best title for the title.
4. As a follow-up activity or as homework, students can write three to five titles of their own for the article (or some other article).
Organization and Structure

Levels: intermediate
Aims: Practice reading newspaper articles to reconstruct a story.
Class time: NO set time
Preparation Time: 20 minutes
Resources: Newspaper articles about an event, a criminal action, a celebration, or any activity containing part of a story.

Newspaper articles, especially those related to criminal or police actions, offer students a variety of topics, styles, and levels of difficulty. The information they contain usually includes elements related to time, place, and action. Learners must not only understand the information but be able to reconstruct it chronologically because journalists present the current state of affairs in the opening paragraph and then proceed to narrate the event that led to it.

Procedure

1. Select articles a few paragraphs in length, Long articles can be short ended, but they should contain enough information to make the story coherent.
2. Give the students a copy and ask them to read it.
3. Either write a chart on the board for them to completer, or reproduce it as a handout. Try to have a chart with at least two labels; time and action.
4. As soon as the students have read the article and seen the chart, ask them to fill it in, taking care to organize the information in chronological order, starting either with the most recent time or with the most remove. Have them work individually or in pairs.
5. After a few minutes, when most or all of the students have finished have them compare their charts.
6. Complete the chart on the board following the directions the students give you. As this stage, it is important to comment on different words used to fill in the chart or on any differences in how students complete it. Reconstructing the story allows students to discuss their different interpretations of it.
7. At this point, the students have all the elements of the story and are ready to narrate it starting from the beginning. Ask them to retell the story or rewrite it.
Note, Organize, Summarize

Levels: Advanced; preacademic
Aims: encourage active reading and self-monitoring of comprehension
Class Time: Two to three class periods
Preparation Time: 45 minutes- 1 hour per passage
Resources: academic textbook-style passages of more than two pages.

Students may need help learning to apply reading skills to study techniques when preparing for discussions, tests, and report writing. They can improve their comprehension if they learn to see how ideas are connected in an entire piece of writing.

Procedure:
1. Have the students skim an assigned passage to get a general idea, the content and overall organization. Ask them to discuss the article briefly as a group, then assess how well they have understood the whole passage.
2. Instruct the students to make notes in the margins about important ideas within and across paragraphs. You might model this step with a transparency of the reading and an example of your own notes for the first paragraph and then show them your model or elicit their suggestions.
3. Have students work on their own, making brief marginal notes on their own words of ideas from each paragraph. Special care should be taken to recognize relationship among ideas extending across paragraphs.
4. Divide students into pairs or small groups. Have them compare the marginal notes. After they have made good headway, hand out blank transparencies to each group and have them outline the passage or part of the passage on the transparency.
5. Show outlines from two or more groups, simultaneously if possible. Have students compare similarities and differences with their own group outlines. Encourage questions about why certain points were or were not included in the outlines. After discussing the outlines have students assess how their comprehension changed from the first, cursory reading to the second reading during which they took their marginal notes.

Caveats and Options
1. Using a student-generated outline, have the students summarize the article orally or in writing. Ask the students not to look at the original while they are summarizing. These summaries can be used to test comprehension.
2. As students become used to this procedure, they can begin writing and comparing their own outlines, instead of notes, with those of their classmates.
3. Semantic maps or other representations of organizational structure may be substituted for outlines.
4. This series of reading activities should be practiced several times throughout a term so that the students begin to acquire independently note-taking strategies.
5. If students are not familiar with outlining or mapping techniques teachers may have students take marginal notes to fill in partially completed outlines or topic maps. Guidance through the procedure should gradually decrease.
6. Not all passages lend themselves to paragraph-by-paragraph analysis. Students may need some help incorporating ideas from two or more paragraphs into one section of an outline.
Jigsaw Reading

Levels: Beginning and intermediate
Aims: Help students work cooperatively to figure out the ordering of paragraphs in the reading passage.
Class time: No set time
Preparation Time: 20-30 minutes
Resources: Reading passage with at least four paragraphs

This activity has been around for a long time and takes various forms. Regardless of the type of jigsaw reading, the activity is enjoyable and helps students to conceptualize the reading passage by looking at a small part and then fitting the individual pieces together. It works well as a prereading activity.

Procedure
1. Divide the reading passage by paragraph and make copies for students.
2. Arrange the class into groups according to the number of paragraphs in the reading passage.
3. Give each group a complete set of the passage, making sure that each person has a different paragraph.
4. Tell the students to put the paragraphs together in an appropriate order. Have them begin by reading their own paragraphs and then telling the other members of the group what they are about.
5. Ask the groups to share with the class the ordering that they have agreed on. Discuss the reasons for the various orderings the group selected.

Caveats and Options
1. Set a time limit—this turns the activity into a contest.
2. For basic readers, do the activity with scrambled sentences instead of paragraphs.
3. Distribute a copy of the original reading passage to each student.
Reading Rate - Pump It Up

Levels: Intermediate+
Aims: Increase reading rate
Class Time: 5-10 minutes
Preparation Time: 15 minutes
Resources: Whatever text students are using

Rapid reading techniques prepare students to read fluently by getting them away from reading word-by-word. One advantage of this reading rate activity is that entire class can be reading the same text or individual readers may be reading material that has been self-selected.

Procedure:
1. Give students 1 minute to read as much as material as they can in text. Time them.
2. After a minute, tell them to stop and write the number 1 where they are in the text.
3. Then have the students return to the beginning of the passage and read again for another minute.
4. After the second minute, have them write the number 2 where they are in the text. The goal is to read more material in the second minute than in the first.
5. Repeat this procedure a third and fourth time. Each time have the students record the number (1, 2, 3, or 4) so that comparisons can be made for each minute-long period.

Caveats and Options:
Because reading rates can vary greatly from student to student, comparisons should not be made between two students. Progress can be measured as students evaluate their own reading performances.
Repeated Reading

Levels: Intermediate+
Aims: Increase reading rate and comparison of second language readers
Class Time: 5-10 minutes
Resources: Whatever text students are using

Readers build reading fluency and learn to progress text more efficiently when they reread. Samuels (1979) states that the repeated reading technique emerged largely from the teaching implications of the theory of automatic information processing in reading. According to automaticity theory, a fluent reader decodes text automatically—that is, without attention a-thus leaving attention free to be used for comprehension...One important function of repeated reading is that it provides the practice needed to become automatic” (p.46).

Procedure:
1. Select a passage from the text assigned for the class with comprehension questions already prepared. Prepare questions for special reading materials used in class.
2. Have students reread a short passage over and over until they achieve criterion levels of reading rate and comprehension. The criterion levels may vary from class to class or student to student. Goals to work towards are criterion levels of 200 words-per-minute with at least 75% comprehension.

Caveats and Options
Teachers can set a criterion level for a class or, better yet, students can set their own criterion level and focus on improvement of reading fluency without a particular emphasis on testing reading comprehension.
Developing Metalinguistic Reading Skills

Levels: Low intermediate
Aims: Practice eye travelling along the boundaries of subject, verb, and object of sentences, recognizing and relating their meanings.
Class Time: 25-30 minutes
Preparation Time: 10-15 minutes
Resources: A paragraph or two from newspapers, magazines, or texts.

Few L2 students have been trained to utilize reading strategies that are frequently used by native speakers. These two activities are effective in developing comprehension and speed in reading.

Procedure:
1. Have student pairs locate the main verb or verb phrase, subject, and object of each sentence in the paragraph and underline them.
2. Take turns practicing eye travelling by reading alternating sentences in the paragraph aloud, pausing at the end of the identified subject, verb, and object clusters.
3. Ask each pair to read the passage silently for comprehension and to decide that the main idea of the paragraph is.
4. Ask the pairs to discuss, check their comprehension, and prepare to answer your questions.

Caveats and Options:
Have subsequent paragraphs include sentences that are longer and more complicated.
Speed reading

Levels: Any
Aims: Increase reading speed
Skill: Scanning
Class Time 10-20 minutes
Preparation Time: 5 minutes (if the students’ text includes comprehension questions and the teacher’s manual includes an answer key)
Resources: Class set of a previously unread text One answer key for every several learners

Many learners, especially those who have studied English through grammar/translation, read far too slowly to process meaning. Also, many students don’t consider the purpose of their reading and, as a result, often don’t understand much of what they read. This activity increases their awareness by having them focus on the questions to be answered before they read. It also builds speed by teaching students to scan for particular information.

Procedure:

1. Have learners turn the reading passage face down on their desks.

2. Tell them that this is a speed reading activity and that you will ask each question twice to make sure everyone understands. When you tell them to start, they should turn over the text and look for the answer as quickly as possible. When they find it, they should call out the answer.

3. Do the first two or three questions as indicated in Step 2. When a student answers, have that person show the other the location of the information in the text. Once they understand the procedure, move on to Step 4.

4. Divide the class into groups of four or five. In each group, one person is the “quizmaster.” That person gets a copy of the answer sheet. Quizmasters take over your role from Step 2. They ask the question (twice!). Then members of their group compete to find the answers (The quizmasters clarify with you any questions about which they’re unsure.

Caveats and Options

1. If students are answering at the same time, have them put an eraser or other object in the middle the group. It represents a “game show buzzer.” Learners must touch the buzzer before they can answer. The problem of who was first is solved because the hand on the buzzer will indicate the fastest person.

2. Rotate the role of quizmaster: The person who answers a question correctly becomes quizmaster for the nest one.

3. If students have a difficult time understanding the questions at Step 2 and are unused to clarifying what they hear, have everyone stand. Read the question. Wait until everyone is seated before starting.

4. This activity works best with literal comprehension questions. Although such questions represent only one level of testing understanding, they are the most common type in many textbooks. Also begin with questions about the general meaning of the passage so students have an overall understanding before focusing on specifics students have an overall understanding before focusing on specifics.
Reading Relay

Levels: Any
Aims: Give readers a purpose for reading and encourage them to share their knowledge of a reading passage
Class Time: 30-45 minutes
Preparation Time: 30 minutes
Resources: Reading passages from students’ reading text or from other sources

In this activity, which focuses on speed reading, skimming, and scanning skills, students compete against a clock—but not against one another. If you have not done cooperative learning activities in the class before you might want to introduce the concept of cooperative learning before you try this activity.

Procedure:
1. Divide the reading passage into easy-to-read parts. The students work in groups so make sufficient sets for the number of students in the class. For example, if you have 12 students and the story has three parts, make four sets.
2. Make up any kind of comprehension questions you wish for the entire reading passage.
3. Divide the students into small groups. The number of students in each group should equal the number of reading parts you have in each set.
4. Explain the activity. Each member of the group receives a different part of the reading. They read that part as many times as they can before the signal. At the signal, the students pass the reading passage to the student on their right. This continues until each student has had an opportunity to read each part of the passage.
5. Hand out the reading to each group. Tell the students to start reading as you begin to time them. The length of time you let the students read depends on their ability and how much you want to focus on skimming skills and reading speed.
6. After the students have finished reading all the parts of the reading collect them and give each group one copy of the comprehension questions. As the students work as a group to answer the questions.
7. Give each student the entire reading and go over the comprehension questions.
Increasing Reading Speed

Levels: Intermediate
Aims: Heighten awareness of students’ reading speeds and then increase them
Class Time: 30 minutes
Resources: Lesson from An American Sampler, American Patterns, American Vistas, or another short passage. Reading speed chart, Time record chart, Watch with a second hand.

It is important to be able to read passages quickly to understand the main ideas. When readers process a test too slowly, they cannot absorb meaning fully and may only be able to process individual words.

Procedure:
1. Choose an easy passage 300-1,500 words long, depending on the students’ reading proficiency.
2. Draw the figure below on the blackboard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Seconds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Ask the students to start reading. While timing the reading, pint at the seconds and write in the numbers of the minutes. When the students finish reading, tell them to look up to see their times.
4. Have students write their times to the time record chart, if they are using textbooks with one, or on a chart that they make up if they are not. They should use the reading speed chart to find out how many words/minute they are reading and record this information of the time record chart. (Students can also calculate reading speed by dividing the number of words in the passage by the time speed reading.)

Caveats and Options
This technique should be used over a period of time. It makes students aware of their reading speed and how it is improving. The technique is of course, used in conjunction with exercises related to reading comprehension.
Literature - Making Stories Their Own

Levels: Intermediate+ elementary
Aims: Practice reading for comprehension; Provide different ways for students to respond
Class Time: 45-60 minutes
Preparation Time: 15 minutes
Resources: Ethnic folktales, legends, and realistic stories

When students engage in activities requiring them to reread stories, their understanding at the literal and interpretive levels improve greatly. Ethnic folktales, legends, and other stories make rereading enjoyable.

Procedure:

1. Pictomap. After they read or listen to a story, ask students to
   • Draw a map identifying where major scenes took place
   • Retell what happened at each place
   • Cut out circles to draw the episodes as inset pictures
   • Glue pictures onto the map
   • Draw arrows to indicate event sequence

   They can go back to the story at any point of the project. This activity works well with adventure stories. Structures covered include sequences and cause-effect.

2. Point-of-view. Using a talk show format, have students take on the roles of guests and host. As they work together to plan for question and answers, encourage students to express their feelings and view points as though they were the real characters. This activity allows students to understand a story from an insider’s point of view. It also enables students to consider values and interpretations of events as they consider various perspectives. Role play during the actual presentation time is a wonderful opportunity for ESL students to plan with ways of speaking.

3. Mural. Ask students to create a definite scene that best represent the story. It is necessary to emphasize careful reading or library research if necessary to get the details right. The main thrust of project is to interpret the tone and mood of the story. Students can experience how to create desirable effects using different media, such as paint, chalk, finger paint, and three dimensional paper art. (Use dark paper as background; avoid white.)

4. Sculpture. Give clay to students to create a solid symbol for the story. It is important to have two or three students work together because through discussion, they can come up with a theme or underlying message of the story. After the sculpture is done, they need to explain orally or in written form how their sculpture is a symbol for the story.
Prereading Vocabulary Development

Levels: Intermediate+

Aims: involve the students in the learning and teaching of the vocabulary needed to understand an assigned reading.

Class time: 50 minutes
Preparation Time: 30 minutes
Resources Any suitable reading

The more the students are directly involved in an activity, the more they will benefit. This activity requires cooperation among the students and holds them responsible for both teaching and learning the vocabulary needed to understand the reading passage.

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into small groups.

2. Give each group a handout (see Appendix below) and assign the students a certain section of the reading. All groups should choose a responsible group leader to act as secretary and make sure all group members participate.

3. Have students read over their assigned section, and then, as a group choose four unfamiliar vocabulary items that are important for understanding the reading. The students should find the dictionary definition that corresponds to the word’s usage in the sentence, then fill in the handout as directed.

4. On the board write the following:
   
   Group 1     Group 2      Group 3       Group4
   
   Word Line   Word Line     Word Line     Word Line
   
5. When all the groups have completed their handouts, ask one student from each group to write his group’s words and the line number in which they are found on the board. The other students should copy the words as they are being written on the board.

6. Go over the pronunciation of the words.

7. Have groups come to the board one by one to present their words. They should read the line from the text in which the word is found, then give the definition of the word as it is used in the sentence.

8. Ask other students to listen carefully and write definitions, asking for clarification when necessary. When all the groups have finishing the students will have a vocabulary guide to help them read article on their own.

9. As a final step, test the students. Make up a matching quiz using the words and definitions.
Appendix:

Direction: with your group members, complete the following exercise
You are responsible for paragraphs ____________

1. Vocabulary
    Choose four unfamiliar vocabulary words and find the dictionary definitions that correspond to how the words are used in the sentences. You will explain these words to the class.

    | Word | Line | Definition |
    |------|------|------------|
    | 1.   | ( )  |            |
    | 2.   | ( )  |            |
    | 3.   | ( )  |            |
    | 4.   | ( )  |            |

2. Comprehension
    Write four comprehension questions (that require a short answer) about the information given in your paragraphs.

    1.
    2.
    3.
    4.

3. Summary
    On the back of this paper, write a summary (brief notes only) of the information found in your paragraphs. You will present this to the class.
Choose Recognition

Levels: Beginning+
Aims: practice word recognition and discrimination skills; Facilitate automatic decoding skills
Class Time: 2-5 minutes
Preparation Time: 30 minutes
Resources: Material the class has been reading recently

Through a large number of encounters with any given word, an L1 reader develops automatic and efficient decoding skills. L2 readers because they do not encounter words with the same frequency as L1 readers, do not usually develop such skills. Even advanced learners are sometimes hampered by a laborious decoding process. However, because fast and automatic decoding skills are necessary for efficient reading, it is important that L2 readers have the opportunity to practice this skill at all levels.

Procedure:
1. Choose 10-15 target words, that us new words that the class have across recently.
2. For each target word, find a number of distractors (i.e. words that are similar to it, but are not identical). If the target word is a noun include the plural; if it is a verb, include some inflected forms. Find other words that might be confused with the target word, either visually or aurally.
3. Type each target word on a separate line. Beneath it, type the target words together with a number of distractors.
4. In class, distribute a copy of the exercise to each student and also students to locate the target word in each line as quickly as they can.

Caveats and Options
1. For beginners, the target words and the distractors should be defined by numbers of letters, and only one target word should be put among the distractors. For intermediate or advanced learners, the procedure could be made progressively more difficult. Possible ways of doing this are (a) including the target word more than once; (b) taking away any numbering system; (c) putting the distractors on the same level as the initial target word; and (d) using different fonts (see Appendix below).
2. This procedure uses only bona fide words of English. Some writer suggest a variation on this exercise which is more like a proofreading task: The distractors are the target word with some typing errors introduced (omission of letter, addition of letter, inversion of letter order).
3. This procedure is most useful if you use it in conjunction with textbook you use in other classes. This way you can build up a batter of exercises you will be able to use with future classes as well.

Strategies for Coping With Vocabulary

Levels: Intermediate+
Aims: Develop strategies for coping with unfamiliar vocabulary
Class Time: No set time; Preparation Time: No set time
Resources: Appropriate reading materials; Overhead projector and transparencies

Proficient readers routinely make decisions on how to process the new or unfamiliar vocabulary they encounter as they read. Less proficient readers lack such strategies and waste time searching through dictionaries for definitions of words they do not need to know to understand a given piece of reading. This activity encourages them to practice effective strategies.

Procedure:
1. Select reading materials that are roughly appropriate for the reading ability level of the students.
2. If possible, prepare an overhead transparency of several paragraphs of the material, if this is not possible, provide copies for each student of the materials.
3. Discuss with the students the strategies you want them to learn.
   • For example, some new words may be safely ignored or skippered because their meaning contributes little to the main idea of the reading material: If the purpose of a reading is to give an overview of a country’s exports, one may read something like, Country Exports a variety of ores and minerals such as tin, copper, iron, bauxite, etc. We assume that new word is bauxite. The efficient reader skips the word bauxite knowing from the context that it either a metal or a mineral, and for the purposes of understanding the reading, that is sufficient. To interrupt the reading and looking up the meaning in a dictionary is an inefficient reading practice.
   • The second strategy is to recognize new words which are defined by the context in which they appear. For example, Malaysia an exporter of bauxite one from which aluminium is extracted. The context in this case clearly defines what bauxite is. Thus there is no need to look up the meaning of the word.
   • The last strategy is to identify words which are not defined in context and the understanding of which is necessary for comprehension of the passage. For example, Bauxite is Malaysia’s single most important export. In this case, bauxite is not defined by context, it is clearly something of importance to Malaysia’s economy, and therefore understanding it is important. When this kind of vocabulary is encountered, the student will need to have recourse to a dictionary or seek assistance from a resource person. But before doing this, the student should read ahead a few lines to see if the context eventually defines the meaning of the word.
4. Working with a transparency of the material and an overhead projector, identify those words which are unknown to a majority of the students. For a few examples, show the students which words may safely be ignored, which are defined by context, and which must be researched for their meaning. Shift to a testing mode and ask the students to identify the words that fall into the three categories. Work either with the class as a whole or divide the class into groups and have the groups make the decisions.
5. If desired, pass out short passages (or use a transparency) that contain all three categories and test ability of the students to recognize them. This should be a culminating activity, used only after the students demonstrate that they are doing well at recognizing the different categories of words.
Developing Word and Phrase Recognition Exercises

Levels: Beginning and Intermediate
Aims: Provide students with opportunities to improve their reading recognition skills
Class Time: No set time
Resources: Class readings

Recent reading research has indicated that accurate, rapid, and automatic recognition skills often distinguish skilled readers from less skilled readers. Furthermore, much research indicated that “comprehension deficits can at least in part be traced to deficiencies within the word recognition process” (Chabot, Zehr, Prinzo & Petros, 1984 P.148). This activity exercises students’ word and phrase recognition skills.

Procedure
Development of Word/Phrase Recognition Exercises
1. In order to develop an exercise with 20 items, select 20 key words from a reading passage that students will read, are likely to read, or would be interested in reading.
2. For each key word, generate a string of five words that will serve as a recognition exercise item; one of the five words in the string should be identical to the key word. The other words will serve as distractors. For example:
   Key word
   thorough through thorough thought though tough
   smiled smelled sweet smoked sweated smelled

3. When ordering the string of words for each key word, be sure to place the identical word in different positions (at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the string).

4. When selecting distractors, keep the following variations in mind:
   a) Morphological variations of the same word
      prove proved proves proven prove proves
      give gave gives give given giving
   b) Similar letter clusters
      look hook cook took book look
      bike like mike hike bike dike
      strike streak strike steak stroke spike
   c) Recordered letters
      meat team tame meat mate
   d) Similar orthographic form
      thorough thorough through thought though tough
      moon noon moon soon cococon room
      disturb distress dislike disturb distant distill
      bands bands lands hands sands fans
      wheat whale where wheel wheat what
e) Random variation

babies bounds drowned babble bubble babies
sister system disaster stern sister sisters

It is not uncommon for all these variations to be incorporated into a recognition exercise comprising 20 key words.

5. At the bottom of the exercise page, provide students with a means for keeping track of their time and accuracy. For example:

Time: __________ seconds
Number correct: ________/20

6. Phrase recognition exercises can be written by following these same guidelines. Because of space limitations on the page, it is advisable to include four phrases rather than five after the key phrase. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in the ball at the hall in the fall on the ball in the hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the bend at the beam at the bend at the bank in the band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a jar in a jam for a job in a jar on the jar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for the prince for a price in the rice for his price for the prince</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Classroom Procedures**

Do word/phrase recognition exercises regularly throughout a semester or school year. After the first introductory period—during which you (a) explain the overall importance of developing efficient reading skills, (b) give a rationale for these exercises, and (c) explain and practice the procedure—devote only a few minutes to the recognition exercises. Students will learn to

- Start when you say to begin (ideally when the second hand of the classroom clock is on the 12)
- Look at the key word/phrase in the left-hand column
- Move eyes to the right as quickly as possible to identify the identical word/phrase
- Cross out the identical word/phrase and then quickly move on to the next line, for example: Flowers flavours flow/ers floats floods favourite
- Look up the clock and record exact time (in seconds and/or minutes) needed to finish at the bottom of the page;
- Correct answers and mark down the number of mistakes on the bottom of the page.

Three recognition exercises should be done consecutively. The first can be considered a warm-up exercise; students then strive to proceed faster and more accurately with the last two. Start out with word recognition exercises and later have students do phrase recognition exercises. With both types of exercises, students have fun, improve their recognition skills and their reading in general (see Stoller, 1986, for other procedural suggestions).

**Caveats and Options**

Recognition exercises should not be confused with vocabulary expansion exercises; nor should they be seen as a substitute for reading passages. They are simply exercises that help students develop speed and perceptual accuracy with a limited amount of classroom instruction time.