

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION IN TEACHING ENGLISH

ЕФЕКТИВНІ СТРАТЕГІЇ ПОЛІПШЕННЯ РОЗУМІННЯ ПРОЧИТАНОГО ТЕКСТУ В НАВЧАННІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

The aim of the article is to study reading as a lifelong skill to be used both at school and throughout life. Presented is the using of effective strategies in middle school students' reading comprehension in teaching English as a foreign language. It is stressed that teaching reading strategies is a key element in developing student comprehension, while, at the same time, many teachers lack a solid foundation for teaching these reading comprehension strategies. It is widely accepted view that reading has two basic components: word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension. Reading is a highly strategic process during which readers are constantly constructing meaning using a variety of strategies, such as activating background knowledge, monitoring and clarifying, making predictions, drawing inferences, asking questions and summarizing. Understanding this will help educators with assessing reading weaknesses and providing appropriate instruction. Therefore, teachers need to be prepared on how to design effective comprehension strategies and how to teach these strategies to their students. This study aims to study the effective reading strategies in order to improve reading skills in language classes. Strategies are used in combination to solve problems, to think about text and to check understanding. Consequently, teaching comprehension strategies should focus on thinking, problem solving and monitoring understanding. The main question of the study is What reading strategies can help students' reading comprehension studies?

Results of the study indicate that strategies are used in combination to solve problems, to think about text and to check understanding. Consequently, teaching comprehension strategies should focus on thinking, problem solving and monitoring understanding.

Key words: reading comprehension, reading strategies, complexity, predicting, summarizing.

Стаття присвячена дослідженню використання ефективних стратегій розуміння учнями середньої школи прочитаного тексту в навчанні англійської мови. З порівнянням контекстів у статті аналізуються

характеристики деяких стратегій. Завдання статті – дослідити читання як навик на все життя, який можна використовувати як у школі, так і протягом усього життя. Представлено використання ефективних стратегій розуміння прочитаного учнями середніх шкіл під час навчання англійської мови як іноземної. Підкреслюється, що навчання стратегій читання є ключовим елементом у розвитку розуміння учнями, водночас у багатьох учителів немає міцної основи для навчання стратегій розуміння прочитаного. Поширена думка, що читання складається із двох основних компонентів: розпізнавання (декодування) слів і розуміння мови. Читання – це вищою мірою стратегічний процес, під час якого читачі постійно будують смисл, використовують різні стратегії, серед яких активація базових знань, моніторинг і уточнення, створення прогнозів, висновків, питання й узагальнення. Розуміння цього допоможе викладачам оцінити слабкі місця в читанні, надати відповідні інструкції. Отже, учителі повинні бути готові до розроблення ефективних стратегій розуміння, до навчання учнів цих стратегій. Це дослідження також спрямовано на вивчення ефективних стратегій читання з метою поліпшення навичок читання на мовних курсах. Стратегії використовуються в поєднанні для вирішення проблем, обмірковування тексту і перевірки розуміння. Отже, стратегії навчання розуміння повинні бути зосереджені на мисленні, вирішенні проблем і відстеженні розуміння. Головне питання дослідження: які стратегії читання можуть допомогти учням у розумінні прочитаного? Результати дослідження показують, що стратегії використовуються в поєднанні для вирішення проблем, обмірковування тексту і перевірки розуміння. Отже, стратегії навчання розуміння повинні бути зосереджені на мисленні, вирішенні проблем і відстеженні розуміння.

Ключові слова: розуміння прочитаного, стратегії читання, складність, прогнозування, узагальнення.

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Introduction. Reading is the main part of learning English to achieve the goal in developing reading comprehension skills. Reading comprehension is essential to academic learning areas, to professional success, and to lifelong learning. As a challengeable problem, reading comprehension has been discussing among middle school students (Duke). Unless students are consciously learning from elementary school, they cannot understand the meaning of what they have read during their school years and possibly throughout their lives. The students obtain useful opportunities to better career promotion through developing reading comprehension skills [7].

Reading comprehension is the main factor that all content standards have in common. In order to provide growth opportunities in every subject matter, reading comprehension strategies must be taught to obtain the knowledge needed to satisfy the accountability standards.

Therefore, the essential strategies to improve understanding as below [2]:

- 1) understand the text, facts, events and contents of the text;
- 2) explain the main idea based on the content of the text;
- 3) to see the behavior of the person involved in the description of events and facts and motives and intentions of their relationships;

- 4) understanding the idea of the text;
- 5) understand the content of the text, evaluate it and express your own attitude;
- 6) understand the expressiveness (punctuation) of the written speech;
- 7) understand the author's skill, idea, the essence of the work, understand and evaluate thoughts;
- 8) understand and appreciate the realities of life that are based on the text. (Adams, 1995)

Purpose statement. The purpose of this review is to examine instructional strategies to improve comprehension for students in English Language.

1. Current situation of students reading comprehension in the middle level classes

At the middle level (grades V–VI) of students' reading comprehension in English can be understood only with the use of rapid reading and translation techniques. There are some limitations in developing students' reading comprehension skills and using effective strategies in the classroom. As the reading process is focused to the development of linguistic skills, students haven't been able to develop other skills. Moreover, many students have difficulty in comprehending text, as well as decoding, predicting, questioning, learning text structure and summarizing (Fig. 1) [1].

Most students prefer doing lexical-grammatical skills after reading, as well as using tenses, preposition, and conjunctions correctly, finding words and phrases, etc. Gaining social skills as responding questions, predicting content comparing story elements, describing characters or events need to be improved in peers. Social skills whether intentionally or not, lead to critical thinking while reading, because it is also important for students to know what to think as far as what they know. In order to develop critical thinking skills students need to demonstrate their intellectual views. Giving attitude, opinions or evaluating content of the story has great impact of students' expressiveness, fluency and free speech [14]. As an extension stage of reading process students

can make context clues, design their own story or booklet, story maps, essays for improving intensive creative skills.

2. Effective strategies of reading comprehension in English

These strategies include: aiming for reading, predicting, highlighting meaningless readings, asking questions during reading, visualizing the reader, linking with previous knowledge, understanding the text structure, and summarizing the text. These strategies help the reader build relationships between what they can read with the text [13].

a) making predictions is the first strategy to encourage active reading and keep students interested, no matter if they are accurate or not.

This strategy involves the ability of readers to get meaning from a text by making informed predictions. Good readers use predicting as a way to connect their existing knowledge to new information from a text to get meaning from what they read.⁹ Before reading, they may use what they know about an author to predict what a text will be about. The title of a text may trigger memories of texts with similar content, allowing them to predict the content of the new text.

During reading, good readers may make predictions about what is going to happen next, or what ideas or evidence the author will present to support an argument. They tend to evaluate these predictions continuously, and revise any prediction that is not confirmed by the reading.

If the wrong prediction indicates a misunderstanding, then you will need to read it again. *Instructions for students:*

- demonstrate drawings, content, chapter titles, maps, and diagrams;
- write predictions about the text on the whiteboard;
- what do you know about this author? What are there in the text?
- Use words or phrases that confirm these predictions as you read;

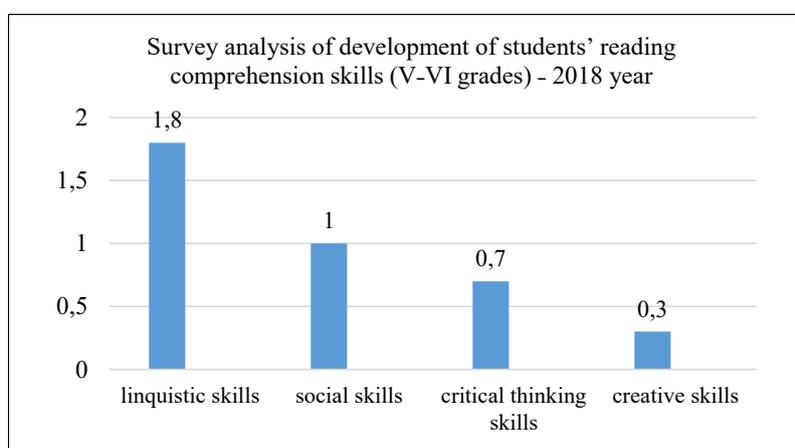


Fig. 1.

- Review the prediction or make new ones [9].

Goal Setting. Teaching students to set goals before they read is also a good idea. Initially, the goal might be to answer your questions. Eventually, they should be able to set their own goals such as “I want to understand why the Civil War started”. “Before reading, good readers tend to set goals for their reading”, reports the article “What Research tells Us About Reading, Comprehension, and Comprehension instruction” “They are likely to focus more of their attention on the parts of the text that are most closely tied to their reading goals” [16].

Planning Ahead. Reading doesn't accomplish much in and of itself. Reading assignments should be connected to future class discussions, oral presentations, tests, or reports. Thus, you should urge students to stop reading when they think of a point they want to make for a class discussion, oral presentation, test, or report. They should write down their points. Emphasize that they can prepare for a test while reading. There is nothing wrong with giving students an idea about questions on tests. You want them to practice improving their skills so they're ready when they're being graded;

b) making imagination:

this involves the ability of readers to make mental images of a text as a way to understand processes or events they encounter during reading. This ability can be an indication that a reader understands a text. Some research suggests that readers who visualize as they read are better able to recall what they have read than are those who do not visualize.

Imagination is especially valuable when it is applied to narrative texts. In reading narratives, readers often can develop a clear understanding of what is happening by visualizing the setting, characters, or actions in the plot. However, visualizing can also be applied to the reading of expository texts, with readers visualizing steps in a process or stages in an event or creating an image to help them remember some abstract concept or important name.

Some children use the forms, spatial relationships, motions and colors to stimulate their imagination [12].

Instructions for students:

- imagine the character or situation in your imagination. Add details to the author's description;
- imagine fiction as a movie and the characteristics of the heroes. Describe the plot within time and space;
- imagine the processes and explanations that are taking place;
- use nouns, verbs and adjectives to create images, diagrams, or other images;
- use graphic organizers (e. g tables, charts, etc.) to display information;
- create sketches and diagrams on paper.

Developing students' reading comprehension depends on the appropriate leveled book. If you

ensure reading process in the classroom and engage students actively, we need to choose appropriate leveled books. The leveled books ensure relevant instruction in comprehension, vocabulary; close reading of text and increases fluency and comprehension as developmentally appropriated [10].

Urge Thinking While Reading

Perhaps the most important tip you can give learners about how to read is that their reading comprehension is most likely to improve when they *stop* reading. Students should be thinking while they're reading rather than reading continuously. Thus, they should be taught to stop when they are confused or have a question or thought about what they have just read. Teaching students to stop and think might lead them to reread what they have just read or seek the answers to their questions in the material that they haven't read yet;

c) asking questions and responding:

this strategy involves readers asking themselves questions throughout the reading of a text. The ability of readers to ask themselves relevant questions as they read is especially valuable in helping them to integrate information, identify main ideas, and summarize information. Asking the right questions allows good readers to focus on the most important information in a text [2].

Generating good questions may also lead readers to focus on problems with comprehension and to take actions to deal with these problems [17].

By generating questions, students become aware of whether they can answer the questions and if they understand what they are reading. Students learn to ask themselves questions that require them to combine information from different segments of text.

Allowing children to form their own questions encourages them not to be overwhelmed and to learn actively.

Instructions for students:

- before reading the text think about the topic based on the title, chapter titles, and visual information. Then, keep a record of what interests you;
- as you read, pause, think or write a question. If you are unsure or confused about something, ask a question [5].

Questioning the Author

The Questioning the Author procedure involves discussion, strategy instruction, and self-explanation. It encourages students to reflect on what the author of a selection is trying to say so as to build a mental representation from that information. Teacher and students work collaboratively, reading to resolve confusion and to understand the meaning of the text.

Focusing on a segment of text, the students respond to teacher questions such as the following:

- What is the author trying to say?
- What does the author mean by this?
- Why is the author saying this?

– What is the author getting at?

Through modelling, the teacher helps students to understand that some parts of a text can cause confusion and hinder comprehension [11]. The teacher then discusses with students what they can do when comprehension problems occur. Students learn to “grapple” with text by emulating the teacher’s questioning techniques;

d) reading aloud and checking:

reading aloud is the central step for improving reading comprehension. It benefits middle level school students getting good reading behavior [4]. Students can demonstrate deep understanding doing pause to check while reading aloud and reflect think-aloud elements to focus the meaning of the text. They have a chance to copy or take notes to identify the main idea. Think-aloud helps students monitor their own thinking as they read and improves their comprehension. After reading aloud teacher can make a discussion that helps students make critical connections [15];

e) looking text structure:

the attention to the text structure is an excellent strategy for reading in details and planning the text. It is important that students read through all the headings and subheadings; plan the whole part of the text. They learn to how information is organized hierarchically in a passage and change within a paragraph. In this way they can use the setting, character, and plot as the elements of a story’s structure. Moreover, there will be some diagrams, graphs, charts or pictures that can be applied in reading to use a story structure and support the students to gain an overview of the chapter [8];

f) using context clues:

this strategy develops students’ linguistic skills, as well as vocabulary, lexis and grammar. Breaking down the words they can divide the words into stem or root word, find out definitions, synonyms, opposites and choose symbols or picture [7].

Urge Note Taking

It’s likely most of high school classmates did not take notes while they did their schoolwork. In college, though, everyone took notes in their textbooks. Students should know that college students regularly highlight important material via underlining, circles, and notes in margins. They can take notes too, in notebooks rather than textbooks. Students should be encouraged to stop reading after they have read something important and write down that fact, point, or argument. They should also be writing the answers to your pre-reading assignment questions. Teaching students to set goals before they read is also a good idea. Initially, the goal might be to answer your questions [6];

g) summarizing:

summarizing the text, you need entire text or part of the text their own words. It makes students move

to remember the text in full. Asking students to write summaries of what they have read sounds like you’re requiring them to do a lot of work, but you can emphasize that these summaries can reduce how much time they spend studying, or cramming, for a test. Essentially, these summaries can be homework. They can also help students prepare for class discussions and oral presentations.

Summarizing gives children the opportunity to differentiate key ideas from small details [3].

Instruct the students:

- as you read, find out the main events or ideas. Mark it in the book, or mark those events or thoughts;
- review the information or story at the end of the chapters and chapters. Mention key points or events and details that support them;
- after reading, summarize the text. Highlight important points and support them with appropriate details;
- You can look at the text again to check for transitions or generalizations. Take a break and write your answers.

Comprehension Monitoring

This involves the ability of readers to know when they understand what they read, when they do not understand, and to use appropriate strategies to improve their understanding when it is blocked. Comprehension monitoring is a form of metacognition. Good readers are aware of and monitor their thought processes as they read. In contrast, poor readers “just do it”.

The strategies employed by good readers to improve understanding are called “repair” or “fix-up” strategies. Specific repair strategies include rereading, reading ahead, clarifying words by looking them up in a dictionary or glossary, or asking someone for help.

In general, good readers use a variety of strategies such as the ones just discussed to construct meaning as they read. However, not all good readers use the same strategies; good readers tend to develop and practice those strategies that are most useful to them. Further, good readers are flexible in their strategy use: they switch from strategy to strategy as they read; they use different strategies with different kinds of texts.

The point is, because good readers have conscious control of their strategy use, they are able to make decisions about which strategies to use and when to use them. Most good readers do this with little or no explicit strategy instruction. Most students, however, can benefit greatly from organized, explicit instruction that teaches them to use specific strategies for understanding text. The good news is that specific comprehension strategies can be taught and learned – and that their deliberate use by readers improves comprehension.

Conclusions. The results of the reading awareness scale and my personal experience showed that there was a lack of knowledge in the area of read-

ing strategies in my students at the beginning of the study. The students had a lack of knowledge and practice in reading strategies however after a comprehensive study, there was an improvement in their success. At the beginning as being the researcher, I had some worries about how to implement the strategies in the classroom. The number of the strategies.

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The final conclusion of the article is that there are some difficulties in reading comprehension in middle education levels. The effective strategies for teaching comprehension of text could be embedded. The studied literature and analysis highlight that the use of modern strategies in reading process not only improves students' linguistic knowledge in English, but also enhances critical thinking and creative skills. In addition, the implementation of effective strategies ensures expressiveness, consistency and fluency of oral speech in reading comprehension.

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