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STRATEGIES OF READING SKILLS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASS

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Abstract. *Reading comprehension remains one of the central challenges in English language instruction, particularly in contexts where learners can decode a text but struggle to construct meaning from it. The present article rewrites and extends an action research study on the role of explicit reading strategy instruction in improving learners' reading performance in an English language classroom.*

The study focused on six core strategies—predicting, visualizing, making connections, summarizing, questioning, and inferring—because each strategy supports a different dimension of comprehension and metacognitive control. The classroom project involved 15 intermediate-level students enrolled in an integrated-skills course. A reading awareness survey, classroom observation, guided strategy instruction, and the Metacomprehension Strategy Index were used to examine whether students became more aware of purposeful reading practices and more capable of applying them during sustained reading tasks. The intervention was implemented through teacher modelling, whole-class practice, small-group work, and independent application over several weeks. The findings suggest that many students began the study with limited awareness of how skilled readers actively engage with texts; however, after explicit and repeated strategy instruction, students demonstrated stronger strategic awareness, greater confidence, and better overall comprehension. The article argues that reading strategy instruction should be integrated systematically into English language curricula and teacher preparation, especially in classrooms where students have had limited prior exposure to metacognitive reading practices.

Keyword: *reading comprehension, reading strategies, English language teaching, metacognition, action research.*

INTRODUCTION

Reading is not a mechanical act of pronouncing written words; rather, it is an interpretive, interactive, and socially situated process through which readers negotiate meaning with a text. Effective reading therefore requires more than vocabulary recognition or grammatical knowledge. It involves the coordinated use of background knowledge, textual cues, inferential reasoning, and self-monitoring in order to understand both explicit statements and implied meanings. In educational settings, reading competence is especially significant because it influences achievement across disciplines, shapes academic confidence, and supports lifelong learning.

The literature has long described reading as a foundational life skill. Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) characterized reading as a cornerstone of school success and of later personal and professional development. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) likewise emphasized that literacy proficiency is indispensable in modern societies where individuals must process increasingly complex written information. When students read without strategic awareness, they may complete a text without grasping its central ideas, organizational structure, or argumentative purpose. As Kose (2006) argued, effective reading requires learners to move beyond the visible surface of words and reach the deeper layer of meaning embedded in the text.

For this reason, reading comprehension instruction cannot be reduced to assigning passages and asking students to answer questions. Good readers typically engage in a set of deliberate mental activities before, during, and after reading. They anticipate content, monitor understanding, create mental images, connect new information with prior experience, pose questions, synthesize ideas, and revise their

interpretations as necessary. Teele (2004) noted that understanding what one reads is the central goal of reading, while Block and Israel (2005) showed that explicit strategy instruction can improve students' comprehension when it is taught systematically. Duke and Pearson (2005) further argued that comprehension strategies should be named, modelled, practised collaboratively, and then transferred to independent reading.

The present article revisits an action research study on reading strategy instruction and rewrites it into a more extended academic form suitable for publication. The topic remains unchanged: the study examines whether explicit instruction in reading strategies can improve students' reading comprehension in an English language classroom. In doing so, the paper also clarifies why strategy instruction matters pedagogically and how it can be integrated into classroom practice.

Reading Strategies and Their Role in Comprehension

Reading strategies are purposeful cognitive and metacognitive procedures that readers use to construct meaning, solve comprehension problems, and regulate their engagement with a text. Strategy instruction is valuable because it makes invisible mental processes visible to learners. When teachers model how and why a strategy is used, students begin to understand that comprehension is an active process rather than a passive reception of information. The present study focused on six widely cited strategies: predicting, visualizing, making connections, summarizing, questioning, and inferring.

1.1. *Predicting*

Predicting is the process of anticipating what a text may discuss and what may occur next during reading. This strategy gives students a reason to read attentively because it encourages them to test expectations against textual evidence. Block and Israel (2005) reported that skilled readers regularly use prior knowledge and prior reading experience to generate hypotheses about a text before they encounter all of its details. Predictions may be formed from a title, heading, illustration, opening paragraph, key terms, or genre conventions. In classroom practice, predicting becomes most meaningful when students revisit and revise their expectations as they read. As Duke and Pearson (2005) explained, prediction without verification does not contribute substantially to comprehension; the benefit comes from comparing anticipations with the actual development of ideas in the text.

1.2. *Visualizing*

Visualizing refers to the mental construction of images, scenes, relationships, or conceptual representations while reading. Adler (2001) and the National Reading Panel (2000) described visualization as an important aid to memory and understanding because it helps readers transform abstract language into a more concrete mental experience. In narrative texts, students may imagine settings, characters, and actions; in expository texts, they may visualize sequences, processes, or conceptual contrasts. Teachers can support this strategy by inviting students to draw what they imagine, describe a scene verbally, or identify words that triggered a mental image. Visualization is particularly helpful for learners who struggle to maintain attention during longer passages because it keeps the text cognitively vivid.

1.3. *Making Connections*

Making connections allows readers to link textual information to prior knowledge, personal experience, other texts, and wider social realities. This strategy is often discussed in terms of text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world relationships (Teele, 2004). When readers connect new information to what they already know, comprehension becomes more meaningful and more durable. Such connections also help students evaluate the relevance of ideas and compare perspectives across texts and contexts.

In instructional settings, teachers may ask learners whether a text reminds them of a previous reading, an event in their own life, or an issue in contemporary society. These prompts encourage active engagement and help students see reading as a meaning-making activity rather than a decoding task.

1.4. *Summarizing*

Summarizing requires readers to identify essential information, distinguish central ideas from supporting details, and restate the text in a condensed form using their own words. Adler (2001) argued that summarization strengthens comprehension because it demands selection, organization, and synthesis. Students who summarize effectively must decide which ideas are important, which details are subordinate, and how different parts of a passage fit together. This strategy is especially useful with longer or conceptually dense texts because it prevents students from treating all information as equally significant.

Through summarization, learners develop a clearer sense of textual structure and improve their ability to retain information over time.

1.5. *Questioning*

Questioning involves the generation of inquiries before, during, and after reading in order to guide attention, clarify meaning, and deepen interpretation. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) emphasized that questioning supports comprehension because it leads readers to search for evidence, resolve uncertainties, and detect gaps in understanding. In classroom instruction, questioning may begin with teacher-generated prompts, but students should gradually learn to formulate their own questions. These questions may be factual, inferential, analytical, or evaluative. The National Reading Panel (2000) found that student-generated questioning contributes to comprehension because it integrates textual segments and promotes purposeful rereading.

1.6. *Inferring*

Inferring is often described as reading between the lines. Serafini (2004) explained that readers must combine textual evidence with prior knowledge in order to draw conclusions that are not stated directly. Inferential thinking enables students to interpret tone, determine causes, anticipate outcomes, identify underlying themes, and construct coherent meaning from partial information. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) noted that inference also allows readers to make sense of images, graphs, dates, and contextual clues that support understanding beyond literal wording.

Because inferencing is cognitively demanding, students often require substantial modelling and guided practice before they can use it independently.

ACTION RESEARCH QUESTION

The study was designed as classroom-based action research with a practical instructional goal: to improve students' reading comprehension by teaching them how proficient readers actively use strategies. The teacher-researcher assumed that many students encountered reading tasks without a sufficiently developed repertoire of strategic behaviors. As a result, they may have read texts line by line without monitoring meaning, identifying important ideas, or using prior knowledge to support understanding.

The central research question was: Would reading strategies help my students' reading comprehension? More specifically, the project sought to determine whether explicit instruction in the six strategies identified above would increase students' awareness of reading processes and support improved comprehension in regular language-class activities.

METHOD

The project adopted an action research design. Action research is appropriate when practitioners investigate their own classrooms in order to understand a problem, test an

intervention, and improve practice. Brown and Dowling (2001) described it as inquiry that aims at transformation within the practitioner's own setting, and Corey (1953) argued that its value lies primarily in the improvement of everyday educational practice rather than in broad generalization.

McNiff (1988) outlined action research as a cyclical process involving planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This framework guided the present study.

Participants and Context

The participants were 15 students enrolled in an intermediate-level integrated-skills course.

The class was selected because students were expected to handle increasingly demanding reading materials, yet many still showed signs of difficulty in constructing meaning from texts independently. The classroom therefore provided an appropriate context in which to examine whether explicit strategy instruction could strengthen comprehension.

3.1. Data collection instrument and the process of the research

Several sources of evidence were used during the project. First, a Reading Awareness Survey was administered to determine whether students were familiar with the targeted strategies.

The initial survey indicated that 9 of the 15 students were not aware of the strategies, suggesting a need for direct instruction. Second, the teacher-researcher used classroom observation throughout the intervention to monitor how students responded to guided practice and whether they began to use strategies more independently. Third, following the instructional phase, the Metacomprehension Strategy Index (MSI) was administered in order to identify changes in students' awareness of strategies used before, during, and after reading.

In addition to these instruments, four reading texts from the coursebook Hemispheres were used as practice materials over four weeks. These texts served as the immediate classroom context in which students applied and discussed the strategies.

Procedure

The intervention was implemented over several weeks. During approximately three weeks of initial instruction, the teacher-researcher introduced the six strategies explicitly and modelled how each one could be used during authentic reading. Modelling involved verbalizing thought processes through think-alouds so that students could observe how an experienced reader predicts, questions, infers, or summarizes while interacting with a passage.

After teacher modelling, the strategies were practised progressively: first through whole-class activities, then in small groups or pairs, and finally in independent reading tasks. This gradual release of responsibility was intended to move students from supported participation to autonomous application. During the subsequent four weeks, the class worked with selected coursebook texts and continued to use the strategies in discussion, written responses, and guided comprehension activities.

Findings and Discussion

The findings suggest that the students entered the project with limited knowledge of purposeful reading strategies. This conclusion emerged from the initial survey, which showed that a majority of the class lacked awareness of the targeted strategies, and from the teacher- researcher's early classroom observations.

At the beginning of the study, students often approached reading as a task of locating answers rather than building understanding. They needed considerable support in recognizing that effective readers actively monitor and regulate comprehension.

After the intervention, evidence from classroom practice and the post-instruction MSI indicated improvement in students' metacomprehension and reading performance. Students became more capable of discussing what they were doing while reading, and they showed greater

readiness to use strategies intentionally rather than accidentally. For example, they began to make predictions based on titles and headings, connect passages with previous knowledge, and return to the text in order to justify inferences or answer questions. These behaviors suggest that reading was becoming more strategic and more reflective.

The implementation process also revealed pedagogical challenges. At first, the number of strategies seemed potentially confusing for students, especially because several of them overlapped in practice. Moreover, strategies such as questioning, inferring, and summarizing required more sustained teacher guidance than simpler predictive tasks. The teacher- researcher therefore had to monitor each stage carefully, provide repeated modelling, and scaffold students' participation until the strategies became more familiar. These observations are consistent with Duke and Pearson's (2005) argument that comprehension strategies should not merely be named, but should be explicitly demonstrated and rehearsed in meaningful contexts.

Overall, the study supports the view that explicit strategy instruction can improve reading comprehension when it is taught as part of an interactive classroom routine. The results also reinforce the argument that students benefit from learning how skilled readers think. Rather than assuming that comprehension develops automatically through exposure to texts, teachers should create repeated opportunities for students to observe, discuss, and apply strategic reading behaviors.

Implications for English Language Teaching

The study has several implications for English language teaching. First, reading strategy instruction should be embedded within the curriculum rather than treated as an occasional remedial activity. Students need repeated practice across different kinds of texts if strategies are to become transferable habits of mind. Second, teacher education programs should devote more attention to the pedagogy of reading comprehension. Teachers cannot effectively teach strategies unless they understand both the cognitive processes involved in reading and the classroom techniques required to make those processes explicit.

Third, strategy instruction should be scaffolded. Students are unlikely to master complex strategies through explanation alone; they need modelling, guided practice, peer interaction, and independent application. Fourth, assessment should include attention to strategic awareness, not only correct answers. Tools such as reading surveys, reflective journals, checklists, and metacomprehension inventories can help teachers understand whether students are learning how to read strategically. Finally, future studies may extend this work by involving larger samples, comparing learners across proficiency levels, or examining possible differences related to gender, instructional context, or text type.

CONCLUSION

This article has rewritten and expanded an action research study on reading strategy instruction without changing its central topic. The study demonstrates that reading comprehension can be strengthened when students receive explicit instruction in predicting, visualizing, making connections, summarizing, questioning, and inferring. The classroom intervention showed that many learners initially lacked awareness of these strategies, yet improved after structured modelling and guided practice. The findings therefore support the view that reading instruction in English language classrooms should cultivate strategic, reflective, and purposeful readers. When students are taught not only what a text says but also how to approach it, comprehension becomes deeper, more independent, and more sustainable.

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