



TEXT COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

Khusnobod Abdiraimova

Doctoral (PhD) Student, Alisher Navoi Tashkent
State University of Uzbek Language and Literature

E-mail: axusnobod@gmail.com

ORCID ID: aaa0009-0005-5433-3147

Abstract

This article analyzes effective strategies used to develop students' reading comprehension skills. In modern education, reading comprehension involves not only understanding the content of a text but also interpreting it, identifying key ideas, analyzing important information, and providing interpretation. The article discusses the content, stages, and educational significance of strategies such as summarizing, synthesizing, clarifying, K-W-L, SQ4R, and TO'STT in developing students' thinking skills. The advantages of each strategy and their role in developing students' reading literacy and logical thinking are scientifically analyzed.

Keywords: Reading comprehension, reading literacy, reading strategies, summarizing, synthesizing, clarifying, inference, prediction, visualization, questioning, K-W-L, SQ4R, TO'STT, text analysis.

Introduction

In today's globalization process, new approaches and methods are required in all spheres of human life, including the education system. In particular, developing reading literacy and the ability to comprehend and analyze texts has become an urgent issue. This is because the foundation of any learning process is the ability to read a text with understanding and draw correct conclusions from it. Therefore, in order to develop students' reading comprehension competence, teachers are required to select and apply effective strategies appropriately and purposefully.

In global pedagogical practice, reading comprehension strategies enable students to think actively about texts, use their prior knowledge and experience, and independently analyze new information. This article provides a scientific and theoretical analysis of the essence and types of reading comprehension strategies, as



well as the possibilities of applying them in teaching students. At the same time, the role and significance of these strategies in the educational process are highlighted, and methodological recommendations for their effective implementation are presented.

Main Part

A strategy is defined as a path or approach taken by individuals to achieve a new goal. S.G. Paris defines strategy as planned and consciously implemented actions and skills. [Paris S. G., Lipson M., and Wixson K. 1983, 293–316] D.S. McNamara defines text comprehension strategy as “a behavioral or cognitive action that arises to enhance understanding in particular contextual situations.” [McNamara D. 2007]

Sometimes individuals may encounter difficulties in the process of learning and understanding. Such situations often arise due to reasons such as lack of interest in the topic, low motivation, inability to understand certain words or sentences, or difficulty in connecting one piece of information with another. Various reading strategies have been developed to overcome such problems.

In order to understand a text correctly, it is very important for a reader to be active before reading, during reading, and after reading, and to use various strategies and methods. A successful learner sets goals before reading, previews the text, predicts the general meaning, and tries to determine in advance what the text will be about. During the reading process, the reader carefully reads the text from beginning to end, rereads when necessary, takes notes on important parts, and makes predictions and analyses based on what has been read. The reader analyzes the ideas presented in the text, compares them with existing knowledge, and evaluates the author’s views in relation to their own thoughts in order to draw conclusions. During reading, the reader also examines the main aspects of the text, identifies difficulties encountered, rereads unclear words, sentences, or paragraphs, and attempts to resolve comprehension problems. After finishing the reading, the reader reviews the text again and evaluates it.

M. Pressley and C. Block define text comprehension strategies as specific, teachable processes that support active, skilled, self-regulated, and goal-directed reading. [Pressley M., Block C. 2002, 511–543] Comprehension strategies enable individuals to recall information from their prior experiences, which is very important for learners. Students who apply active cognitive strategies are expected to understand



and remember texts better. Strategies can serve as tools for acquiring knowledge, developing it, and applying its content in practice. When students practice these strategies collaboratively in groups, they become accustomed to them and later can apply them independently in appropriate situations. [Stahl Katherine A.D. 2004, 57]

In conclusion, text comprehension strategies ensure:

- understanding the meaning presented in the text;
- recognizing the structure of the text;
- directing attention toward reading;
- active participation in the reading process;
- establishing connections between the text content and personal life;
- sufficiently analyzing and evaluating the text;
- retaining the information read for a long time and recalling it quickly.

There are numerous text comprehension strategies, and specialists have classified them in different ways. Comprehension instruction is not always conducted based on the same set of skills and strategies. Some studies have shown that four main strategies increase comprehension effectiveness and can be applied in different situations. These four strategies are: questioning, predicting, summarizing, and clarifying.

E.O. Keene and S. Zimmermann, among many strategies, identified those considered most effective and reduced them to seven key strategies:

- activating prior knowledge;
- organizing information according to its importance;
- analyzing the text and the author;
- engaging emotions;
- making inferences;
- synthesizing conclusions;
- using repair strategies. [Keene E. O., Zimmerman S. 2007]

Prediction. The prediction strategy helps students set a purpose for reading. This strategy is used to introduce the text to students and attract their attention to it. Images and illustrations play an important role in this strategy.

Prediction is based not only on observing how predictions develop during the reading process but also includes processes such as activating prior knowledge, previewing, and reviewing. [Duke Nell K., Pearson David P. 2002] What makes this process important and meaningful is the comparison between the predictions made before



reading and the meanings and information obtained from the text during reading. In this strategy, individuals make assumptions about future events or situations. These assumptions are based on existing knowledge. During the reading process, they verify the accuracy of these assumptions. In this way, growth in the level of comprehension is observed. [Palincsar A. S., Brown A. 1984, 117]

Three types of cues are used in prediction:

Topic cues — usually derived from the title of the text, images, or the first or second paragraph. Students make predictions based on their experiences.

Text cues — these cues become meaningful when students are taught different types of texts. For example, sections of stories or articles may develop differently; therefore, students make predictions based on their knowledge of text structure.

Purpose cues — texts are read for different purposes, such as entertainment, completing homework, solving a problem, and so on. Depending on the student's reading purpose, the expected outcomes from the text may vary.

Using these cues, students make predictions.

The prediction strategy consists of the following stages:

- identifying students' prior knowledge about the passage;
- determining how to read the title of the text and which approach to use before making predictions;
- giving students time to make predictions;
- comparing predictions during reading and with other passages;
- checking the accuracy of predictions at the end of reading;
- understanding how prediction benefits the individual. [Klingner J. K., Vaughn S., Boardman A. 2007]

Visualization. Visualization refers to understanding what has been read in the form of mental images in one's memory. The images formed in the mind indicate how an individual interprets the text.

Another direction of the visualization strategy is expressing students' mental images through drawings. This strategy helps establish a strong connection with the text, apply text and imagery to real-life situations, and generate creative ideas. [Harvey S., Goudvis A. 2006, 165]

In informational texts, students are asked to visualize the information they read by using key words. After visualization, students are required to explain the images they imagined, compare them with the texts they have read, and finally exchange opinions



about the process. These stages constitute the effective use of the visualization strategy.

Another aspect of this strategy is representing the images imagined by students through diagrams or graphs. [Klingner J. K., Vaughn S., Boardman A. 2007]

Questioning. This is a method used before reading, during reading, and after reading a text. Questions asked during reading ensure active engagement with the text, signal important points for attention, and encourage predicting what might happen in the following sections.

During reading, students ask themselves questions and also respond to the teacher's questions. These questions may sometimes require deep analysis or may involve simple comprehension. Meaning construction also requires students to ask themselves questions in order to increase understanding, find answers, solve problems, search for information, and discover new knowledge. [Lienemann T., Reid R. O. 2006, 165]

Through this method, students' skills in forming questions and their knowledge about different types of questions are developed. When students formulate questions, they also gain the ability to identify the specific information in the text related to the essence of the question. Teachers should regularly ask questions during reading, and students should find answers based on the text.

According to S. Harvey and A. Goudvis, there are six types of questions that encourage students to respond:

Questions whose answers are directly found in the text;

Questions answered based on prior knowledge;

Questions answered by making inferences from the text;

Questions answered through discussion;

Questions answered through research;

Questions that create confusion or challenge understanding. [Harvey S., Goudvis A. 2000]

Teaching the questioning strategy helps connect different parts of the text, improves reading comprehension outcomes, and enhances students' higher-order thinking skills.

Making Inferences. Another skill that should be developed in students is the ability to draw meaning from a text and identify important information. The inference strategy involves reading between the lines and beyond the lines, that is, understanding the implicit and hidden meanings in the text.



Making inferences mainly relies on the learner's prior knowledge about language, the topic, reading purpose, and strategic thinking. It includes examining written text to find clues related to the topic and, once the topic is understood, using existing knowledge and imagination to determine what the author intended to convey. [Duffy Gerald G., Roehler Laura R. 1989] Students combine the information obtained from the text with their existing knowledge and draw various conclusions.

During the inference process, students draw conclusions, make predictions, identify key information, and use various data and images to derive meaning from the text. To develop students' inference abilities, it is necessary to teach how to use graphs, headings, and examples.

Summarizing. Summarizing written material is one of the effective strategies used by students. Summarizing helps learners understand information and store it meaningfully in long-term memory. It encourages students to read for understanding, identify key ideas, and express information in their own words. To achieve success in this strategy, several stages must be followed:

- identifying and removing unnecessary information in the text;
- determining the main idea of the text and expressing it in one's own words;
- identifying and retelling the most important paragraph of the text;
- identifying the relationship between the main and supporting ideas of the text and combining them without distorting the meaning. [Senemoğlu N. 2005]

This process demonstrates that the student understands the main events of the text and can arrange them in a meaningful sequence. A summary should include the main characters, events, problems, and how the problem was resolved. [Barnett Cynthia L., McKown Brigitte A. 2007]

Summarizing encourages students to create their own knowledge structure (schema) based on the ideas and concepts presented in the text. In doing so, it activates executive cognitive processes, directs attention to the sequence of ideas in the text, and reveals clues about how ideas are connected. [Nelson R. J., Smithy D. J., Dodds J. M. 1992, 15]

Synthesizing. Synthesizing refers to the process of creating something new based on existing information. It means combining elements and components in a certain order to produce a new work and generate original ideas. It involves achieving a new form or solution and creating a new product. In this process, creativity, ingenuity, discovery, and imagination play central roles. Synthesis, which has a broader scope



than evaluation and interpretation, is one of the most complex strategies for developing comprehension.

While summarizing means explaining something using existing words, synthesizing involves integrating available information with one's own ideas and forming new thoughts based on it. This is a continuously developing thinking process. It includes stages such as summarizing the text, drawing conclusions, comparing and categorizing, organizing based on these comparisons, reviewing, recalling, and recreating.

In teaching the synthesis strategy, the first task is to explain to the student that it is necessary to constantly anticipate, understand, and clarify what has been read. Students establish a strong connection with the text and develop the desire to think independently. Words and ideas combine with the learner's existing concepts, enabling a creative and unique interpretation of the text. During and after reading, students ask reflective questions about the text and approach it more closely through questions aimed at understanding it. During reading, students should also reflect on their feelings, the reasons for these emotions, what the author might have felt, and what events the author intended to convey. As with other strategies, the teacher guides the process and encourages students to apply the strategy effectively. [Bongratz Karen M., Bradley Julie C., Fisel Kimberly L., Orcutt Jennifer A., Shoemaker Amy J. 2002] Clarifying. During the reading process, students monitor their own reading. [Klingner J. K., Vaughn S., Boardman A. 2007] This strategy helps individuals determine when they do not understand a text and take the necessary steps to clarify meaning. The clarifying strategy directs the student's attention to the parts of the text that are unclear and helps resolve comprehension problems immediately during reading.

The clarifying strategy is most often used in the following situations:

- unknown or complex words;
- difficult concepts;
- confusing or poorly structured texts;
- incomplete information.

During this process, the teacher should frequently ask students the question: *“Does this sentence or text make sense to you?”* At the same time, students should also learn to ask themselves this question.

K-W-L (What I Know, What I Want to Know, What I Learned). This strategy, developed by D.M. Ogle, aims to help students actively engage with a text and



achieve comprehension. [Ogle D. M. 1986, 564] It is particularly recommended for reading informational texts. This strategy allows students to create connections between their knowledge before reading and the knowledge acquired after reading, as well as to organize, summarize, and generalize information.

This strategy consists of the following stages:

- What I Know? — brainstorming is conducted and existing knowledge is reviewed;
- What I Want to Know? — based on existing information, the new knowledge that should be obtained is identified. Questions are developed and the goals of reading are determined;
- What I Learned? — students express the knowledge and achievements they have gained.

SQ4R. This is one of the reading strategies that individuals can use. Initially known as SQ3R, the strategy was later renamed SQ4R after the addition of the stage Reflect (R). The SQ4R strategy consists of six stages:

Survey. A mental overview of the text is formed and certain parts of the text are examined. Questions such as *“What prior knowledge do you have about this topic?”* and *“What previous experiences related to this topic do you have?”* are considered. The student tries to determine what the text is about.

Question. Based on the main headings and subheadings, questions are formulated that can be answered within the text.

Read. The main and supporting ideas of the text are identified, and the student searches for answers to the previously asked questions.

Reflect. The student reflects on the text, forms mental images, and attempts to connect newly acquired knowledge with prior knowledge.

Recite. After reading each section, the student memorizes important points and retells them. Then the student answers previously asked questions aloud without referring to the text. Key sections of the text are repeated either orally or mentally.

Review. Previously written notes are reviewed again. The relationships between the main and other parts of the text are examined. The student rereads sections that were forgotten, misunderstood, or difficult to answer and searches for answers again.

TO‘STT (Analyze – Read – Question – Explain – Repeat). Developed by psychologist Robinson in the 1940s, the TO‘STT reading comprehension strategy remains one of the effective strategies due to its ease of use and efficiency. The TO‘STT strategy is an effective method that helps make the reading process more productive and



improves both reading activity and comprehension ability. Information obtained through reading based on this strategy is retained in memory for a long time. [Butler T. H. 1983]

The TO‘STT strategy recommends what aspects should be considered during text comprehension. It helps students:

- develop their prior knowledge about the topic;
- evaluate the knowledge they already possess;
- initiate the processes necessary for understanding and remembering;
- develop interest in the text. [Tok Ş. 2003, 121]

In general, text comprehension strategies create a foundation for students to consciously process the information they read, distinguish main ideas and details, think independently, and apply acquired knowledge in real-life situations.

Conclusion

The process of text comprehension is not only the reception of the formal meaning of written words and sentences, but also the understanding of their implicit meaning, the main idea, and the author’s intention, as well as analyzing, evaluating, and generating new knowledge based on existing knowledge and experience. In modern education, reading comprehension skills play an important role in shaping students’ level of thinking, knowledge, and communication culture. Therefore, this article analyzed the main strategies that contribute to developing students’ text comprehension abilities in the educational process.

The strategies discussed above serve as effective tools for deep text comprehension, reflecting on the information read, identifying key ideas, interpreting the content of the text, summarizing it, and drawing independent conclusions. In particular, they provide opportunities to strengthen students’ knowledge by activating their prior knowledge, formulating questions about the text, expressing their own opinions, and identifying connections between the text and real-life experience.

In conclusion, text comprehension strategies serve as important pedagogical methods for activating students in the learning process, stimulating their thinking processes, encouraging independent and creative thinking, and developing analytical and critical approaches. In the future, improving these strategies according to students’ age, subject areas, and the complexity level of texts, as well as implementing them widely in practice, will contribute to increasing the effectiveness of education. For this



reason, teaching reading literacy and comprehension strategies remains one of the key tasks of any educational system.

Recommendations:

It is recommended to teach reading comprehension strategies gradually starting from primary grades. At an early age, it is important to develop children's ability to analyze content, identify the main idea, and pay attention to the structure of the text.

Strategies should be selected according to the type of text. For example, K-W-L or SQ4R strategies are effective for informational texts, while summarizing and clarifying strategies are more suitable for literary texts.

Teachers should not limit themselves to explaining strategies theoretically during lessons but should reinforce them through practical exercises and tasks. Demonstrating how each strategy is applied and practicing them together in class greatly helps students understand the process.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of reading comprehension strategies, regular monitoring and analysis should be conducted. Tests, interactive tasks, and oral responses can be used to determine students' achievements and difficulties.

An individual approach should be applied to each student. Since children differ in their abilities, interests, and levels of knowledge, adapting strategies accordingly makes reading comprehension more effective.

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