

## Types of Reading Comprehension in Foreign Language Acquisition

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**Annotation:** The article deals with improving reading skills through reading strategies. Language instructors are often frustrated by the fact that students do not automatically transfer the strategies they use when reading in their native language to reading in a language they are learning. So these issues are discussed in this research.

**Key words:** reading comprehension, reading skill, language proficiency, facilitate learners, reading quickly, reading strategies, academic areas.

Though most ESL students have been learning the English language for many years, they still face major problems with reading comprehension. The main reason for that is most of them lack trainings of learning reading strategies. It is well-known that reading is one of the important skills for ESL/EFL learners to master the language. Anderson claims that the mastery of reading skill could help ESL/EFL learners achieve success not only in English but also in other content-based classes where English language proficiency is required. Cochran states that reading has played a crucial role in overall development in language skills and even in academic success for decades. Reading is one of the important skills for learners to expand their knowledge of the language, cultures, and the world. Learners can get more information that they need through reading different materials, such as magazines, newspapers, novels, books, journals, and so on. With strengthened reading skills, EFL readers will make greater progress and attain greater development in all academic areas. Among these reading skills, appropriate reading strategies will facilitate learners' reading comprehension, especially for L2 readers.

Effective language instructors show students how they can adjust their reading behavior to deal with a variety of situations, types of input, and reading purposes. They help students develop a set of reading strategies and match appropriate strategies to each reading situation.

According to S. Silberstein strategies that can help students read more quickly and effectively include:

- **Previewing:** reviewing titles, section headings, and photo captions to get a sense of the structure and content of a reading selection
- **Predicting:** using knowledge of the subject matter to make predictions about content and vocabulary and check comprehension; using knowledge of the text type and purpose to make predictions about discourse structure; using knowledge about the author to make predictions about writing style, vocabulary, and content
- **Skimming and scanning:** using a quick survey of the text to get the main idea, identify text structure, confirm or question predictions

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- **Guessing from context:** using prior knowledge of the subject and the ideas in the text as clues to the meanings of unknown words, instead of stopping to look them up
- **Paraphrasing:** stopping at the end of a section to check comprehension by restating the information and ideas in the text. Instructors can help students learn when and how to use reading strategies in several ways.
- By modeling the strategies aloud, talking through the processes of previewing, predicting, skimming and scanning, and paraphrasing. This shows students how the strategies work and how much they can know about a text before they begin to read word by word.
- By allowing time in class for group and individual previewing and predicting activities as preparation for in-class or out-of-class reading. Allocating class time to these activities indicates their importance and value.
- By using cloze (fill in the blank) exercises to review vocabulary items. This helps students learn to guess meaning from context.
- By encouraging students to talk about what strategies they think will help them approach a reading assignment, and then talking after reading about what strategies they actually used. This helps students develop flexibility in their choice of strategies.

When language learners use reading strategies, they find that they can control the reading experience, and they gain confidence in their ability to read the language.

Reading is an essential part of language instruction at every level because it supports learning in multiple ways.

- **Reading to learn the language:** Reading material is language input. By giving students a variety of materials to read, instructors provide multiple opportunities for students to absorb vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, and discourse structure as they occur in authentic contexts. Students thus gain a more complete picture of the ways in which the elements of the language work together to convey meaning.
- **Reading for content information:** Students' purpose for reading in their native language is often to obtain information about a subject they are studying, and this purpose can be useful in the language learning classroom as well. Reading for content information in the language classroom gives students both authentic reading material and an authentic purpose for reading.
- **Reading for cultural knowledge and awareness:** Reading everyday materials that are designed for native speakers can give students insight into the lifestyles and worldviews of the people whose language they are studying. When students have access to newspapers, magazines, and Web sites, they are exposed to culture in all its variety, and monolithic cultural stereotypes begin to break down.

When reading to learn, students need to follow four basic steps:

1. Figure out the purpose for reading. Activate background knowledge of the topic in order to predict or anticipate content and identify appropriate reading strategies.
2. Attend to the parts of the text that are relevant to the identified purpose and ignore the rest. This selectivity enables students to focus on specific items in the input and reduces the amount of information they have to hold in short-term memory.

3. Select strategies that are appropriate to the reading task and use them flexibly and interactively. Students' comprehension improves and their confidence increases when they use top-down and bottom-up skills simultaneously to construct meaning.
4. Check comprehension while reading and when the reading task is completed. Monitoring comprehension helps students detect inconsistencies and comprehension failures, helping them learn to use alternate strategies.

According to Sweet & Snow reading comprehension is defined as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning. Specifically, Grabe & Stoller define reading comprehension is the ability to understand information in a text and interpret it appropriately. Lapp and Flood state that comprehension has three levels: (1) literal comprehension (reading on the lines), (2) inferential comprehension (reading between the lines), and (3) critical comprehension (reading beyond the lines).

In the literal level, the comprehension involves the essence of text. According to Mohamad, at this level, the readers are required to understand the ideas and information like what the author is actually saying. Furthermore, Mohamad explains that in the inferential level, the readers are expected to draw conclusion or inference from the statements that are implicitly stated in the text.

Comparing literal comprehension and inferential comprehension, teacher trainers state that literal level of comprehension provides the most important information, while inferential level observes the relationship of information then inferences are made based on the relationships. In the critical comprehension, methodologists illustrate that the readers are expected to have evaluative judgments and reasoning to form new ideas from the information provided in the text. Therefore, what indicates people as good readers is that they have high confidence to control word meaning, phrases, and sentences to get appropriate meaning from the texts. In addition, Berry also proposes the level category of reading comprehension as follows:

Literal level is the most obvious comprehension level. This level involves surface meanings. Literal level is a level where the readers would have not to understand all the meaning but only recall the information in text. According to Berry, at the literal level, the students are looking at what was written by an author at "face value"; little interpretation is needed at this level. In addition, students are building the knowledge, but not to command it at this level.

According to Berry, at this level, the students are attempting to understand what the author meant by what s/he said in the story, paragraph or textbook. Interpretive level shows students' attempt to understand that they memorized at the literal level of comprehension. Mohamad says, at this level, teachers can ask more challenging questions such as asking students to re-arrange the idea, explain the purpose, summarize the main idea, and make the conclusion.

Applied level is a level when the students can criticize the text and start to analyze their understanding. Berry states at this level, the students are reading between the lines and then examining the message from the author and attempting to apply that message to other settings. Berry further explains that at this level the students are able to write their opinion about the text and explain briefly about the content of the text. Instead, they seem to think reading means starting at the beginning and going word by word, stopping to look up every unknown vocabulary item, until they reach the end. When they do this, students are relying exclusively on their linguistic knowledge, a bottom-up strategy. One of the most important functions of the language instructor, then, is to help students move past this idea and use top-down strategies as they do in their native language.

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