MODULE: READING COMPREHENSION
LEVEL: SECOND YEAR

Lecture One: Introduction to Reading Comprehension

Research shows good readers are actively involved with the text, and they are aware of the processes they use to understand what they read.

1. Definitions

Reading Comprehension according to Mckee (2012) is defined as the capability of understanding texts, analysing the information found in these texts, and the ability to interpret the writer's statements and intents correctly. However, Hans & Hans (2015) define reading comprehension as the capacity to which a person can comprehend a text. This type of comprehension arises from the written words and how they bring about knowledge existing outside the text. In other words, comprehension in this sense is a complex yet creative process that depends on the four skills of language (phonology, pragmatics, semantics, and syntax). In addition, Bulut (2017) states that reading comprehension refers to the act of thinking and forming meanings before, during, and after reading. He also states that reading comprehension is one of the main language skills that entail interpretations and identifying the details that are found in written materials, whether they are clear or not.

2. Factors Affecting Reading Comprehension

Sanford (2015) believes that reading comprehension is affected mainly by six factors, which are working memory, vocabulary, prior knowledge, word recognition, reading strategies, and the motivation to read. This is supported by a number of researchers, such as Moghadam, Zainal & Ghaderpour (2012), who state that vocabulary items do affect reading comprehension positively, as committing lexical errors is one of the recurring errors, thus, forming a prominent barrier. It is

also supported by Alfaki & Siddiek (2013), who believe that people use their already existing

information – i.e. prior knowledge – in order to understand any text they would encounter, and it also builds their confidence and security through activating their prior knowledge in regards to the text. As for the working memory, Swanson, Zheng & Jerman (2009) state that poor working memory is one of the factors that have an impact on the person's ability to read competently and be able to understand texts. Furthermore, Birsch (2011) believes that reading comprehension relies on word recognition in order to be achieved quickly and allow the reader to receive knowledge from a text. In accordance with Gilakjani & Sabouri's (2016) findings, it has been indicated that suitable reading strategies do play an essential role in the improvement of reading comprehension skill among learners. As for motivation, its effect on reading comprehension has been discussed in a study by Blay, Mercado & Villacorta (2009); they divide motivation into two kinds. The first kind is intrinsic motivation that stems from the person's willingness and drive to perform the learning task and acquire new skills and experiences. While the second kind, extrinsic motivation is caused by exterior influences, such as rewards, punishments and other variables in an attempt to manipulate one's motivation. In short, motivation, especially the intrinsic motivation, has a larger influence on reading comprehension.

3. Reading Strategies

Teachers can help improve student comprehension through instruction of reading strategies. Predicting, making connections, inferring, questioning, and summarizing are strategies shown by research to improve reading comprehension (Block & Israel, 2005). It is important to teach the strategies by naming the strategy and how it should be used, modelling through the think-aloud process, group practice, partner practice, and independent use of the strategy (Duke & Pearson, 2005).

3.1. Predicting

In order to be a good reader, learners should set a goal for their reading; therefore good readers have a purpose for reading. One strategy for improving comprehension is predicting, which helps the reader set a purpose for their reading. Research has shown that good readers use their experiences and knowledge to make predictions and formulate ideas as they read (Block & Israel, 2005). This strategy also allows for more student interaction, which increases student interest and improves their understanding of the text (Oczkus, 2003). It is important to compare the outcome in the actual text with the prediction process as it will lead the learner to improve his understanding (Duke & Pearson, 2005).

3.2. Making Connections

Making connections is another strategy that can be used in the reading process. By making connections, the learners can activate their prior knowledge and connect the ideas in the text to their own experiences. Reading becomes meaningful when the reader connects the ideas in the text to their experiences and beliefs, and the things happening in the outer world. Students can make text-to-self connections through drawing, making a chart, or writing. Teachers might ask students if they have ever experienced anything like the events in the text. Students can make text-to-text connections through drawing, making a chart, writing, and graphic organizers. These text-to-text connections could be based upon how characters in the story relate to each other, or how story elements relate between stories. Students can make text-to-world connections through drawing, making a chart, writing, or graphic organizers. Text-to-world connections could be done by comparing characters in a story to characters today or comparing the content of the text to the world today (Teele, 2004).

3.3. Summarizing

The process of summarization requires the reader to determine what is important when reading and to condense the information in the readers own words (Adler, 2001). During the summarizing

process, the students will be able to distinguish the main ideas from the supporting ideas. Distinguishing the related knowledge from the unrelated ones is another point in the summarizing process.

3.4. Questioning

Readers can use the questioning before, during, and after reading. The questioning process requires readers to ask questions of themselves to construct meaning, enhance understanding, find answers, solve problems, find information, and discover new information (Harvey &Goudvis, 2000). In this strategy, the students return to the text throughout the reading process to find the answers to the questions asked by the teacher before, during and after the reading. By using the student generated questioning strategy; text segments are integrated and thereby improve reading comprehension (NRP, 2000).

3.5. Inferring

Inferring refers to reading between the lines. Students need to use their own knowledge along with information from the text to draw their own conclusions (Serafini, 2004). Through inferring students will be able to draw conclusions, make predictions, identify underlying themes, use information to create meaning from text, and use pictures to create meaning (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). Students can be given techniques to use illustrations, graphs, pictures, dates, related vocabulary and titles from the text to make inferences.