

Reading Strategies for Effective English Language Instruction

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Type of Receptive Skill: Teaching Reading Skills	Topic: Different Sources of Reading Texts in the Communicative Classroom
Curricular Thread: Reading	Sub thread: Development of Reading Through Interactive Reading Compre- hension

Strategy 1: Jigsaw Reading

Description

The objectives behind this strategy are as follows: it increases reading comprehension through collaborative learning and understanding of new words and main ideas in an interactive manner; promotes accountability in the classroom, as students need to be responsible about assigned tasks to reach a common goal; and improves listening, communication, problem-solving skills, and interpersonal skills. That is to say, the jigsaw reading strategy helps language students create learning in a meaningful way by being accountable of their own learning as well as by learning from their peers.

“Home” and “expert” groups need to be created within this strategy. It should be noted that the strategy enables each student of a “home” group to specialize in one part of a reading text. Students then meet with members from other “home” groups and form “expert” groups. In the expert groups, students are assigned the same part of a reading text to read and analyze in a collaborative manner. After the students, in the expert groups, master the assigned part of the reading text, they return to their “home” groups and share with their group members the most important ideas and essential details they have learned previously. In this regard, Reading Rockets (2019) observed that students act like a puzzle piece in the expert groups. Then when they return to their home groups, they need to work hard in order to put together the entire jigsaw puzzle. This means that when students go back to their home groups, they need to create together a clear picture of the entire reading text under examination. In short, by taking part in this strategy, students are able to build reading comprehension, work cooperatively, enhance language skills and increase problem solving abilities.

Implementation of the Teaching Strategy

These are the suggested steps for the implementation of the Jigsaw Reading strategy, and they should be modified (as needed) based on your students’ English proficiency level.

First of all, language teachers need to have their students form “home” groups; these groups may vary of size, preferably between 3 to 5 members. Also, it will be a good idea to have students with differentiated reading abilities in each group. Therefore, groups should be formed based on heterogeneous grouping. Once the students are in their “home” groups, teachers may go ahead and preview new, unfamiliar vocabulary words from the reading text.

Afterwards, “expert” groups need to be created with the members of the “home” groups. The number of expert groups will depend on how many sections or parts you decide to split the reading text. For instance, if the reading text is divided into 5 parts, 5 expert groups will then be needed.

Each expert group will be assigned one specific part of the reading. It is advisable to ask the group members to do the reading individually and in silence. After that, each group is expected to share and discuss the most important ideas and essential details extracted from the assigned part of the reading. In doing so, the members/students, in each expert group, are expected to gain a good understanding of the specific reading part.

Later on, “home” groups will be rejoined, so the language students can share their learnings of each section or part of the reading with the other home group members. In the “home” groups, students can use their notes in order to let their peers know about the main and secondary ideas of the assigned reading section. The entire strategy implementation may last between 55 and 60 minutes.

Differentiation

Class Size. The class size may range from 35 to 45 students, as public schools have large classrooms. It is important to keep in mind that groups need to be formed on the basis of heterogeneous grouping. Hence, cooperative learning can be maximized.

Availability of Materials. The implementation of the jigsaw reading strategy does not require the use of a lot of teaching materials. However, it will be a good idea to have the following things at your disposal: chairs, tables, concept map example, copies of book or copies of reading texts, poster paper or paper chart, whiteboard, whiteboard markers, colored pens/pencils, pencils, crayons, erasers, and rulers.

Technology. If technological devices and equipment are not available in the classroom, you can implement the jigsaw reading strategy without any difficulty.

Classroom space. A spacious classroom will be ideal for the implementation of this strategy, as the teacher needs to walk around, monitor students’ work and provide as much assistance as possible.

Types of learning environments. English language teachers may want their language students to read a specific part of the reading (or even the whole the reading text) before the Jigsaw Reading strategy is implemented in the classroom during a face-to-face phase of the reading lesson. In this regard, copies of the reading text can be handed in, or the reading text may be uploaded to and shared through a free-of-charge virtual learning environment, such as Edmodo.

Strategy 2: The Inquiry Chart (I-chart)

Description

The Inquiry Chart (I-chart) is a strategy that can be used at different educational levels in order to help language students get the most of the reading act by consulting and learning from different sources of written texts. Therefore, this strategy enables students to gather valuable information about the same topic by reading several, different sources. It is then imperative for teachers to design the I-chart around several questions about one single topic. In addition to that, as stated by Assaf, Ash, Saunders and Johnson (2011) the I-Chart strategy “can be used as a scaffold for whole- or small-group learning and an organizing tool for the research process” (p. 33).

The objectives behind this strategy are as follows: it strengthens reading skills by exposing learners to different sources of reading texts, builds upon prior knowledge or thoughts about a targeted topic, fosters critical thinking and improves reading comprehension.

Then students are asked to read several sources on the topic, and they need to record their answers to the posed questions in the I-chart. At the end, depending on the students’ proficiency level of the target language, they may generate a written summary of the topic as a whole, or come up with sentences that outline the most important information for each posed inquiry. Additionally, students, at lower proficiency levels, may

be asked to draw pictures that represent the main ideas of the topic under analysis. It should be noted that different answers for the posed questions can be explored as a whole class by the end of the strategy implementation.

Implementation of the Teaching Strategy

To begin with, a list of topics may be provided to the language students. Afterwards, the students will go ahead and choose the topic they like the most as a whole class; the selected topic will be examined in class by means of the I-Chart strategy. Secondly, language teachers will need to activate their students' prior knowledge about the selected topic of the lesson by using a variety of techniques, such as the sticky-note storm technique, listing ideas, think-pair-share, among others. Next, a chart with rows and columns needs to be elaborated. It is a good idea to create the chart along with the language students. In consequence, they can a more active role throughout the strategy implementation. It should be pointed out that language learners, with their teachers' guidance, may create different versions of the I-Chart, or teachers can look for and use available I-Charts.

Afterwards, language teachers will have their English students create questions about the selected topic; the generated questions are to be written within the self-elaborated chart from the previous step. Then teachers may provide their students with reading texts where answers for the created questions could be found. In addition, students could be encouraged to look for more reading sources on their own in order to find the needed information to answer the posed questions. It is crucial for language teachers to keep in mind that their students must be allowed to answer the questions in the chart by consulting and reading different reading texts. It is also important to allow the language students to read each text source as many times as they need to.

Furthermore, language teachers should keep the questions within the I-Chart simple for beginning learners of English, whereas questions that require higher-order thinking will be more suitable for advanced learners.

Additionally, more rows could be added to the I-chart; for instance, a row called *summary* (as it is explained below). Moreover, teachers should encourage advanced learners of English to consult online sources or surf the internet and find more in-depth answers for the posed questions in the chart.

As the students consult and read the varied sources of reading texts, they need to document the key ideas that have helped them answer the questions in the chart. Then the language students need to be given time to come up with two or three statements (based on the identified key information) that best answer each posed question. This means that students will be required to summarize the most important information with regard to each posed question. After that, the English students may first report orally their “summary sentences” about each question to their groups and then to the whole class. The entire strategy implementation may last two class sessions of 40/45 minutes each.

Differentiation

Class Size. The class size for this strategy may range from 35 to 45 learners of English. Most of the time, this reading strategy requires independent work; however, it is important to keep in mind that when groups need to be created, they should be formed based on heterogeneous grouping.

Availability of Materials. As regards the use of printed reading materials, or reading texts from textbooks, and non-authentic reading sources in English will be needed to implement this strategy successfully. In addition, it will be a good idea to ask students for the following items: colored pencils, crayons, markers, and/or highlighters. By using these, the students can highlight or underline information that can then be used to answer the questions within the chart. Also, chart papers and construction papers should be provided to the students.

Technology. The I-Chart strategy does not necessarily entail the use ICT tools. If students have access to electronic devices, they could read the electronic or online versions of the different sources of reading to find

the needed information to answer the questions in the chart. Therefore, this will prevent a lot of printing on the teachers' part and students will not need to pay for the copies.

Classroom space. To maximize learning, the average class size can be used to implement this strategy, since a lot of space is not needed for students to walk around and work collaboratively. However, a larger classroom rather than a smaller classroom will be more ideal.

Types of learning environments. A face-to-face lesson will be mostly needed to implement the I-Chart strategy. However, a virtual component may be added to the lesson through the use of flipped learning. For instance, if the topic of the reading lesson is selected in a previous class, different sources of reading texts (and even links to videos) can then be uploaded to a free-of-charge virtual platform or to the Drive administered by one's Gmail account. This will allow the language students to go over the sources of reading and come prepared for the strategy implementation that will take place within the classroom context.

Strategy 3: Story Maps

Objectives

Story maps can be implemented into the language learning classroom before, during or after doing a reading text. If it is done before reading a story, language students' previous knowledge can be effectively activated, and they can feel better prepared and motivated for sharing and discussing ideas later in the lesson. If it is done during a reading story, this will help students recall meaningful and relevant information about the main parts of the story. If it is done after reading the story, learners will have a greater chance to review key information and assess their understanding of the story as a whole (Boulineau, Fore, Hagan & Burke, 2004). With regard to when it is the best time to implement story maps into the classroom, Özmen (2011) stated that having language learners

work on a story map after reading a story is more effective than having them fill the map before.

The objectives behind this strategy are as follows: it improves language learners' reading comprehension through visualization and understanding of various narrative elements, equips language learners with a framework for finding out the main components of a story and helps students synthesize and organize information and ideas in a systematic way. Concerning the conceptualization of story maps, they are regarded as visual representations of the major elements that compose a story. When language learners work on a story map, they focus on the important components or phases of a narrative, its major theme, characters, settings and plot events.

If language teachers implement story maps in a classroom of beginning students of English, they should keep these kinds of maps very simple with one single element or few elements only. For instance, these maps can focus on one element only, such as the sequence and development of the plot of the story. With more advanced learners of English, the maps can focus on several different components, which can be as follows: the main characters, the varied settings where the story takes place, the theme, the plot, the problems or conflicts and even the relationship among these elements. In order to explain how story maps work, teachers need to use explicit instruction with the aim of introducing and modeling the procedure (consisting of the below steps) and giving language learners opportunities to practice in a meaningful and collaborative manner.

Implementation of the Teaching Strategy

To start with, it is imperative to find out a story that is suitable for your students' English proficiency level. Then language teachers need to determine the main components of the story. It will be a wise idea to preview complex or unknown vocabulary words with the students before the discussion phase is organized. Next, teachers can briefly go on discussing and analyzing the main components of the chosen story, such as characters, setting, plot, theme, problems or conflicts and resolutions.

In this way, language students will have an overall idea of the aforementioned components of the story before they read the entire story in-depth when attempting to complete the assigned story map template.

Afterwards, each student needs to be provided with a blank story map organizer. This phase of the strategy implementation can also be carried out in pairs. In doing so, a struggling student can be paired up with an advanced student of English. Later on, teachers need to model how to complete the story map organizer. As there is no one single map organizer template, teachers may provide their language students with the template they think it is the most suitable for their English level.

As students read the selected story and learn about its details individually or in pairs, teachers will have them complete the story map organizer. After completing the map organizers, teachers should help their students to check if all the major ideas of the story were identified and included. Lastly, students should be encouraged to share the information on their story maps to the whole class. The entire strategy implementation may last two class sessions of 40/45 minutes each.

Differentiation

Class Size. The class size may be of 35 to 45 students, as this is the average number of students in public school classrooms. However, this strategy works well with any class size.

Availability of Materials. The implementation of the story map strategy does not require a lot of teaching materials. However, it will be a good idea to make use of the following things: copies of the selected story, whiteboard markers, crayons, colored pens/pencils, pencils, erasers, scissors, glue and rulers.

Technology. No technological equipment is needed for the implementation of the story map strategy. If you want to introduce the components or elements of the story and preview its unfamiliar vocabulary words, you can do so through a Power Point presentation or any other technol-

ogy-based presentation tool, such as Emaze or Prezi. However, this can also be done on the whiteboard or by using poster paper.

Classroom space. A medium-size classroom will be appropriate for the implementation of this strategy, as the teacher needs to walk around the classroom, provide assistance and monitor their students' work.

Types of learning environments. The implementation of the strategy mostly requires face-to-face interaction within the classroom context. The reading lesson, directed by the story map, may be flipped, so the story will need to be selected in advance and sent to the language students. In this way, students can read it before they come to class and even work on learning activities based on the content of the story.

Strategy 4: Retelling

Description

The objectives behind this strategy are as follows: it helps language learners reconstruct a written text; facilitates the development of cognitive skills, such as remembering, synthesizing, ordering and summarizing; and engages language students in genuine and authentic oral communication.

Retelling is an oral activity in which readers explain the main ideas of a written text, and it is a powerful classroom tool for building comprehension (Kissner, 2006). Basically, retelling involves having language learners reconstruct a story they have read before or in class in oral manner. When students retell stories, they are expected to order and summarize information as well as make predictions and inferences.

Moreover, it should be noted that language learners need to be encouraged to retell the story by using their own words.

In addition to an instructional strategy, retelling can be employed as a way to assess in a formative way how well language learners are able to comprehend a story. Then based on the results of this type of assessment, English teachers can help their learners gain a better understanding of the story under study. That is to say that retelling can be viewed as a useful strategy for checking students' understanding in a non-traditional, authentic manner. Therefore, teachers can check their students' language learning and progress more effectively, as they are required to organize information and explain it in a chronological order to their peers.

Implementation of the Teaching Strategy

First of all, language teachers need to choose a reading text that is appropriate for their language students' English proficiency level. In one class session, teachers can briefly explain relevant information of the story without providing too many specific details. And it will be also important to go over unfamiliar and difficult vocabulary words with the students in the same class session. Next, students will be required to read the entire (short or long) story at home and look for the main ideas and essential details in each part or section of the story.

English students will need to get prepared under their language teachers' guidance and assistance in order to do the following tasks in the classroom: identify the settings of the story; find out its major events; look for key information with regard to the three phases of a story, namely the beginning, the middle and the end of the story; elaborate an appropriate sequence of events; and offer an evaluation of the story.

In order to have students successfully retell the stories, teachers will need to provide them with explicit, direct instruction on the use of connectors, linking words and phrases (e.g., first of all, in the beginning, then, next, after that, afterwards, finally, etc.). In doing so, students will be equipped with the knowledge and tools to retell the above-mentioned

three phases of the story in the correct sequence with meaningful details. In a language learning classroom with advanced students, teachers may have them make inferences in order to fill in missing information as well as find out and retell causes of actions and their consequences. The entire strategy implementation may last two class sessions of 40/45 minutes each.

Differentiation

Class Size. The class size for this strategy may be of between 35 and 45 language learners. This reading strategy requires independent, individual work. However, when groups need to be formed, it should be done based on heterogeneous grouping.

Availability of Materials. Printed copies of stories in English will be needed to implement this strategy effectively. In addition, it will be a good idea to ask students for colored pencils and highlighters, so that they can mark, underline and highlight important parts of the story.

Technology. The retelling strategy does not entail the use of technological equipment in the classroom. However, if students have access to technological devices, they could read the electronic version of the selected story.

Classroom space. A medium-size classroom will be ideal to implement the retelling strategy. Within this type of classroom size language students can work collaboratively and the language teacher can walk around, provide help as it is needed and monitor student language learning.

Types of learning environments. The steps that make up the implementation of the strategy will be conducted through a face-to-face lesson. If language teachers do not want to get copies of the story for their students, they may want to upload the story to a free-of-charge virtual platform, such as Edmodo or Easy class.

References

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