Current English Research

Reading

Source: Hattie & Oczkus (Reciprocal Teaching at Work: Powerful Strategies and Lessons for Improving Reading Comprehension)

Date: 2018

Summary:

- Research suggests that there is a need for educators to explicitly teach reading and comprehension strategies
- Four main strategies are summarising, predicting, clarifying and questioning
- Teacher should model ways to extend and deepen comprehension using these strategies
- When children are part of guided reading, the book chosen should be challenging enough that they would not be able to read fluently without adult support
- When children are reading in literature circles, the book chosen should be accessible for them so they can read without adult support

Source: Daniel Willingham (The Reading Mind)

Date: 2017

Summary:

- A classroom informed by cognitive science consists of the 'must haves' (child's states of mind) and the 'could dos' (the teacher's behaviours that alter the child's states of mind)
- Reading 'must haves': factual knowledge supports reading comprehension, proficiency is impossible without practice, progress requires feedback
- Reading 'could dos': retrieval practice, interleaving and comparing examples

Source: E.D. Hirsch Jr. (American Educator)

Date: 2003

Summary:

- Three principles that have useful implications for students' reading comprehension:
    - Fluency allows the mind to concentrate on comprehension
    - Breadth of vocabulary increases comprehension and facilitates further learning
    - Domain knowledge, the most recently understood principle, increases fluency, broadens vocabulary and enables deeper comprehension
- Fluency: if decoding does not happen quickly, the decoding material will be forgotten before it is understood

    - Experiments show that a child who can sound out nonsense words quickly and accurately has mastered the decoding process and is on the road to freeing up her working memory to concentrate on comprehension of meaning
    - Fluency is increased by domain knowledge which allows the reader to make rapid connections between new and previously learned content
    - Prior knowledge about a topic speeds up basic comprehension and leaves working memory free to make connections between new material and previously learned information, to draw inferences and to ponder implication
    - Chunking – a word used by George A. Miller to denote the way knowledgeable people concentrate multiple components into a single item that takes up just one slot in working memory
- Breadth of vocabulary: Vocabulary knowledge correlates strongly with reading and oral comprehension
    - Vocabulary experts agree that adequate reading comprehension depends on a person knowing between 90 and 95% of the words in a text
    - Those that know 90% of the words will understand its meaning and they will begin to learn the other 10% of the words
    - Those that do not know 90% will miss opportunity to learn the content of the text and to learn more words. The prominent reading researcher Keith Stanovich termed this growing gap the 'Matthew Effect' from the passage in the Gospel of Matthew: 'Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath'
    - We need to engage in the best, most enabling kinds of vocabulary building
        - Explicit vocabulary development, especially in Early Years, and especially for children who are behind
        - Most vocabulary growth results incidentally from massive immersion in the world of language and knowledge
- Domain knowledge: domain knowledge enables readers to make sense of the word combinations and choose among multiple possible word meanings. Reading and listening require the reader to make inferences that depend on prior knowledge – not on decontextualized 'inferencing' skill
    - Once print has been decoded into words, reading comprehension, like listening comprehension, requires the active construction of inferences from utterances that are chock full of unstated premises and unexplained allusions
- Language Arts Curriculum:
    - Acquiring word knowledge and domain knowledge is a gradual and cumulative process
    - Top research suggests that 40 minutes of daily decoding instruction is plenty in first grade and for most second graders 20 minutes is ample
    - That leaves time for activities that foster vocabulary, domain knowledge and fluency. Such knowledge could be conveyed through read-alouds, well-conceived

vocabulary instruction and a variety of cumulative activities that immerse children in word and world knowledge
    - Oral comprehension generally needs developing in our youngest students if we want them to be good readers. This means that instruction and practice in fluency of decoding need to be accompanied by instruction and practice in vocabulary and domain knowledge
    - An important vehicle is teacher read-alouds, in which texts selected for their interest, substance and vocabulary are read aloud to children and followed by discussion and lessons that build children's understanding of the ideas, topics and words in the story
    - One problem is the banality of the content of texts used in the curriculum and also the overwhelming amount of fiction compared to non-fiction
    - Every researcher believes that there is initial value in practising comprehension strategies such as predicting, classifying etc. After the initial benefit, further conscious practice of these skills is a waste of time. These skills are better activated in the course of becoming increasingly familiar with the vocabulary and domain of what is being read
- Such immersion in a topic not only improves reading and develops vocabulary, it also develops writing skill

Source: Crandall et al. (Language Comprehension and its connections to knowledge)

Date: 2016

Summary:

Factual knowledge supports reading comprehension

- Research has shown that even with strong phonics teaching in place, children won't be strong readers if they have a limited knowledge – language/vocabulary/key subjects
- These 3 elements to language comprehension must be taught so that pupils apply them strategically when interpreting a text (not automatically applied)

a) Apply background knowledge

- Disadvantaged may be able to decode without comprehension – have less overall knowledge and this is the dominant factor driving reading comprehension
- Can't teach every aspect of knowledge covered in texts – takes years of exposure – knowledge leads to more knowledge
- Could before reading: simple statements – 'we're going to read a story about how animals camouflage themselves'
- Be brief and strategic – know the purpose of what you are going to tell them – want to activate background knowledge that is needed and nothing else that might be a distraction
- Don't reveal info that you want them to extract for themselves

b) Apply knowledge of vocab

- Often seen as the central thread in language comprehension – knowledge of vocab – strong predictor of comprehension ability
- Once in school, can learn 3000 words a year – comprehending many more
- To accomplish this rate of learning, they need to be exposed to new words every day – especially disadvantaged children who come to school knowing millions of fewer words than those not disadvantaged
- Immerse them in vocab

c) Understand language structures that exist between words and within sentences

- Knowledge of grammar
- Inference – behind the text
- Reading strategies

Proficiency is impossible without practice

- Needs to be enough time allocated to independent reading
- Needs to be distinction between academic reading and reading for pleasure
- Children need to understand the purpose of academic reading
- Reading for pleasure if done in the right way can have a positive impact of vocab knowledge/attitudes to reading and ultimately comprehension because of knowledge build up
- Research has shown that a lot of reading programmes don't actually allocate enough time to reading:
    - 20 min reading period
    - Freely choose material
    - Variety of genres
    - Opportunities for discussion

Progress requires feedback

- Same as any other subject, children need to know how to improve

Progress as language comprehenders – focus being on knowledge/vocab/language structures

Source: S.M.R. Watson et al (Evidence-Based Strategies for Improving the Reading Comprehension of Secondary Students: Implications for Students with Learning Disabilities)

Date: 2012

Summary:

- Factors essential to reading comprehension include (i) WM capacity and other executive processes, (ii) prior knowledge, (iii) motivation, (iv) vocabulary, (v) text coherence, and (vi) text structure.

Source: Rupley et al. (Reading and Writing Quarterly)

Date: 2009

Summary:

- Children need to:
    - learn to decode and encode text accurately
    - read text fluently
    - learn to comprehend and learn from text
    - learn to compose text
- One reality that makes reading instruction complicated is that no assessment blueprint spells out precisely where and how much instructional time and effort teachers should devote to each instructional task or strand or which techniques work best with individual learners
- Understanding individual differences among learners offers the answers to these questions. Then, using the right amount of direct/explicit instruction in relation to the desired outcomes is the foundation of effective reading instruction

Source: McConnaughhay (The relationship between reading fluency and reading comprehension for third-grade students, Graduates Research for Education)

Date: 2008

Summary:

- Positive relationship between reading fluency and reading comprehension
- Good comprehension skills are acquired when students have secure decoding skills, fluency skills, background knowledge, motivation and engagement (Pardo, 2004)
- Problems with fluency result/stem from poor decoding skills
- Modelling is a very important aspect of fluency instruction. Students need to hear and see what fluent reading sounds like. Mdelling is the basis of all good fluency insruction. Teachers can implement daily classroom practices such as reading aloud, books on topics, partner reading (Armbruster, et al. 2001)
- Other techniques: choral, echo, phrase, punctuation reading
- Armbruster, et al. (2001): "Text comprehension can be improved by instruction that helps readers use specific comprehension strategies.
    - Monitoring comprehension
    - Using graphic/semantic organisers
    - Answering questions
    - Generating questions
    - Recognising story structure
    - Summarising
- Nation & Angell (2006): "Predictions, drawing conclusions, making inferences, monitoring and clarifying, asking questions, connecting events to prior knowledge, visualising, summarising"

- Kolic-Vehovec & Bajsanski (2006) – recent study: upper elementary children used comprehension monitoring (a strategy used by readers to monitor their understanding as they read) as they read resulted in a significant improvement in their text level comprehension

Source: Hacket, M. G. (Hierarchy of skills, Dept. Educational Research)

Date: 1970

Summary:

- Hierarchy of skills in listening and reading comprehension (grade 2 = year 3)

Skill	Skill Names	Grade 2 n = 84
1	Identifying stated main idea	5
2	Recognizing examples by detail	3
3	Reinstating sequence of ideas	6
4	Inferring main idea from specifics	1
5	Identifying mood	2
6	Applying standards to judge persuasion	8
7	Predicting sequences of thought	10
8	Inferring conotative word meaning	4
9	Identifying sequence inconsistencies	11
10	Inferring speaker's purpose	7
11	Judging logical validity	9

Writing (genres, vocabulary and creativity)

Source: Clark & Douglas (2011), Graves (1983), Olighouse & Wilson (2012) and Copping (2016)

Summary:

- There is strong correlation between reading attainment and writing attainment and there is also a relationship between attainment and enjoyment in reading and writing
- Writing is a complex process, involving the coordination of many high-level cognitive and meta-cognitive skills. Seminal models of the writing process suggest that producing a quality written text requires generating and organising ideas, goalsetting, planning, drafting, revising, and continuously self-monitoring performance.

Subsequently, these models have informed research investigating the importance of writing activities for producing quality writing.

- Research also has explored different elements within the actual written composition, and questioned which aspects are related to writing quality (e.g., organisation, sentence complexity, language)
- Cognitive models of writing emphasise the cognitive and linguistic resources writers need to compose quality text. One resource, long-term memory, helps explain how vocabulary may be used in the writing process. Flower and Hayes (1980) discuss long-term memory within their explanation of the translating process, a process in which a writer renders into linguistic form ideas, experiences, and sensory images that are stored in long-term memory. Vocabulary facilitates this process; without vocabulary such things cannot be expressed
- Creative integration allows for curriculum areas to be taught as individual disciplines but connections are made – 'old' knowledge used to create 'new' knowledge.

Spellings

Source: J. Gentry (Literacy expert and author of 'Spelling Connections')

Date: 2012

Summary:

- There is a direct link between poor spelling and poor reading (Reed, 2012) and there is a disconnection between the latest research and what is happening in schools. The disconnection is that research calls for explicit spelling instruction (Gentry, 2012).
- Five best strategies for teaching spelling (Gentry, 2012):
    - Construct age appropriate word lists that reflect the key patterns and rules.
    - Follow test-study-test cycle.
    - Teach children research-based word learning techniques (see below).
    - Have children self-correct after test.
    - Use spelling games and sorting activities to increase motivation.
- Five effective learning techniques (Gentry, 2012):
    - Self-testing – following a test-study-test cycle
    - Self-explanation – children explain 'how' a spelling rule or pattern works.
    - Elaborative interrogation – children explain 'why' words are spelt in certain ways, e.g. why is *hop* spelt h-o-p and *hope* spelt h-o-p-e?
    - Distributed practice – meaningful practice and application.
    - Interleaved practice – children revisit the words every day.
- Morphological development for prefixes, suffixes, Greek and Latin bases or roots and word histories and origins is key, as well as the development of sound, pattern and meaning.
- Teachers should select spelling words from their spelling textbook, students' content area reading material, students' reading literature and students' writing. Spelling

words originating from the students' reading and writing would have to be individualised. Using a student-directed spelling program to complement commercially-prepared word lists would be ideal; students would be made responsible for learning words unique to their own reading and writing programs (Wallace, 2006).

- Following a literature review, Fitzsimmons and Loomer (1978) reported a number of practices that were ineffective when teaching spelling:
    - Writing words several times each to ensure retention.
    - Encouraging students to depend heavily on phonic rules.
    - Students deducing their own methods to study words.
    - Presenting words in a sentence rather than in a list to introduce the spelling words.