ELT Methods and Practices

Unit 5: Dealing with Reading Skills

Evdokia Karavas

School of Philosophy

Faculty of English Language and Literature

Issues to be discussed in this unit

- The nature of reading.

- How do we read? Models of the reading process.

- Text types, reading purpose and reading strategies: How do they interact?

- Developing a reading lesson: pre-while-post reading.

- Principles for developing reading skills.

Task 1 (1/2)

Below is an extract from a book by Roald Dahl. Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

- But if you don´t each people like all the others´ Sophie said, " then what do you live on?". "That is a squelching tricky problem round here" the BFG answered "In this shloshflunking Giant Country, happy eats like pineapples and pigwinkles is simply not growing. Nothing is growing except for one extremely icky-poo vegetable. It is called the snozzcumber".

Task 1 (2/2)

- "The snozzcumber!" cried Sophie "There is no such thing"

- The BFG looked at Sophie and smiled, showing about twenty of his square white teeth. "Yesterday", he said, "we was not believing in giants, was we?" Today we is not believing in snozzcumbers. Just because we happen not to have actually seen something with our own two little winkles, we think it is not existing. What about for instance the great squizzly scotch-hopper?"

- "I beg your pardon? " Sophie said.

Questions

- What sort of book do you think this extract comes from?

- Who is BFG and who is Sophie?

- Where do you think they are?

- What do think the words in italics may mean?

- In order to answer questions 1-4 you made a number of inferences. What kinds of knowledge did you draw upon in order to make your inferences?

What is reading?

- **The ability to successfully generate meaning from text.**

- Reading, like listening, is a very active, dynamic process. The reader is actively involved in comprehending the meaning of the message; he/she constantly interacts with the text and combines information from the text with other sources of knowledge in order to make meaning. Reading comprehension is the result of **interaction** between the reader and the text.

Models of reading: Bottom up model

Reader builds meaning from the smallest units of meaning to achieve comprehension.

Example: letters > letter clusters > words > phrases > sentences > longer text > meaning = **comprehension**.

Reading is regarded as a process of "decoding", which moves from the bottom to the top of the system of language.

Bottom up knowledge

- Linguistic knowledge is used.

- Knowledge of the:
  - conventions of print.
  - way words look.
  - relationship between sounds and letters.

Bottom up

Sentences/

Phrases

Words

Morphemes

Phonemes
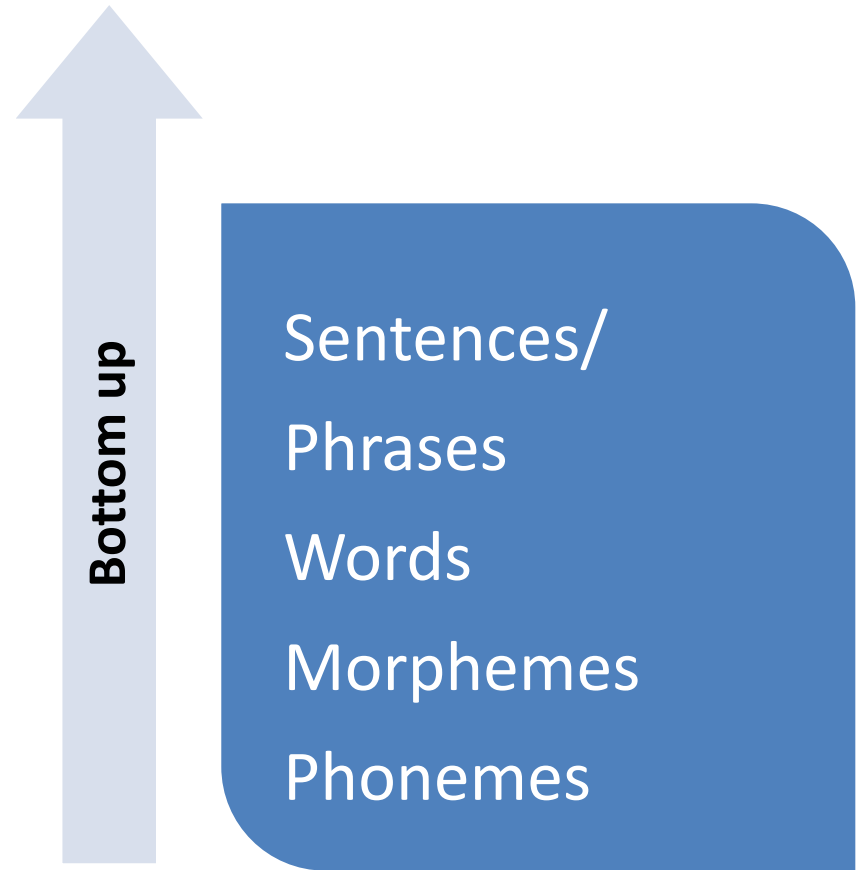
Problems with the bottom up model

- Spelling to sound correspondences are complex and unpredictable.

- Serial processing of every letter in a text would slows reading up to the point where it would be very difficult for meaning to be retained. Readers would forget the beginning of a sentence before they have reached the end.

- In order to assign a phonemic value to a grapheme it is often necessary to know the meaning of the word containing the grapheme.

Can you read this?

I cdnuolt blveiee that I cluod aulaclty uesdnatnrd what I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid, aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mtaetr in what oerdr the ltteres in a word are, the olny iproamtnt tihng is that the frsit and last ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can still raed it whotuit a pboerlm. This is bcuseaethe huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the word as a wlohe. Azanmig huh? Yaeh and I awlyas tghuhot slpeling was ipmorantt! If you can raed this forwrad.

Models of the reading process: The top-down model (1/2)

- This model emphasises the reconstruction of meaning as the reader interacts with the text. Reader generates meaning by employing background knowledge, expectations, assumptions, and questions.

- Using this information the reader forms hypotheses about text elements and then samples the text to determine whether or not his hypotheses are correct.

Models of the reading process: The top-down model (2/2)

- This model of teaching reading is based on the theory in which reading is regarded as a prediction-check process, "a psycholinguistic guessing game" (Goodman, 1970).

- The learner uses pre-existing knowledge (schema) of topic/field, cultural understandings & life experiences to make out what makes sense.

Models of the reading process: The interactive model

As the reader moves through the text, he/she employs various types of knowledge. The reader draws on top-down and bottom-up knowledge alternately or simultaneously depending on the type of text, the reader's background knowledge and his/her language proficiency level.

Example: Reader uses top-down strategies until he/she encounters an unfamiliar word, then employs decoding skills to achieve comprehension.

Both types of knowledge are necessary

- **Language knowledge** is necessary because it enables readers to recognise and decode quickly and accurately letters, words, grammatical structures and cohesive devices.

- **Schematic knowledge** is necessary because it allows us to make sense of new experiences and enables us to make predictions about what we might expect to experience in a given context.
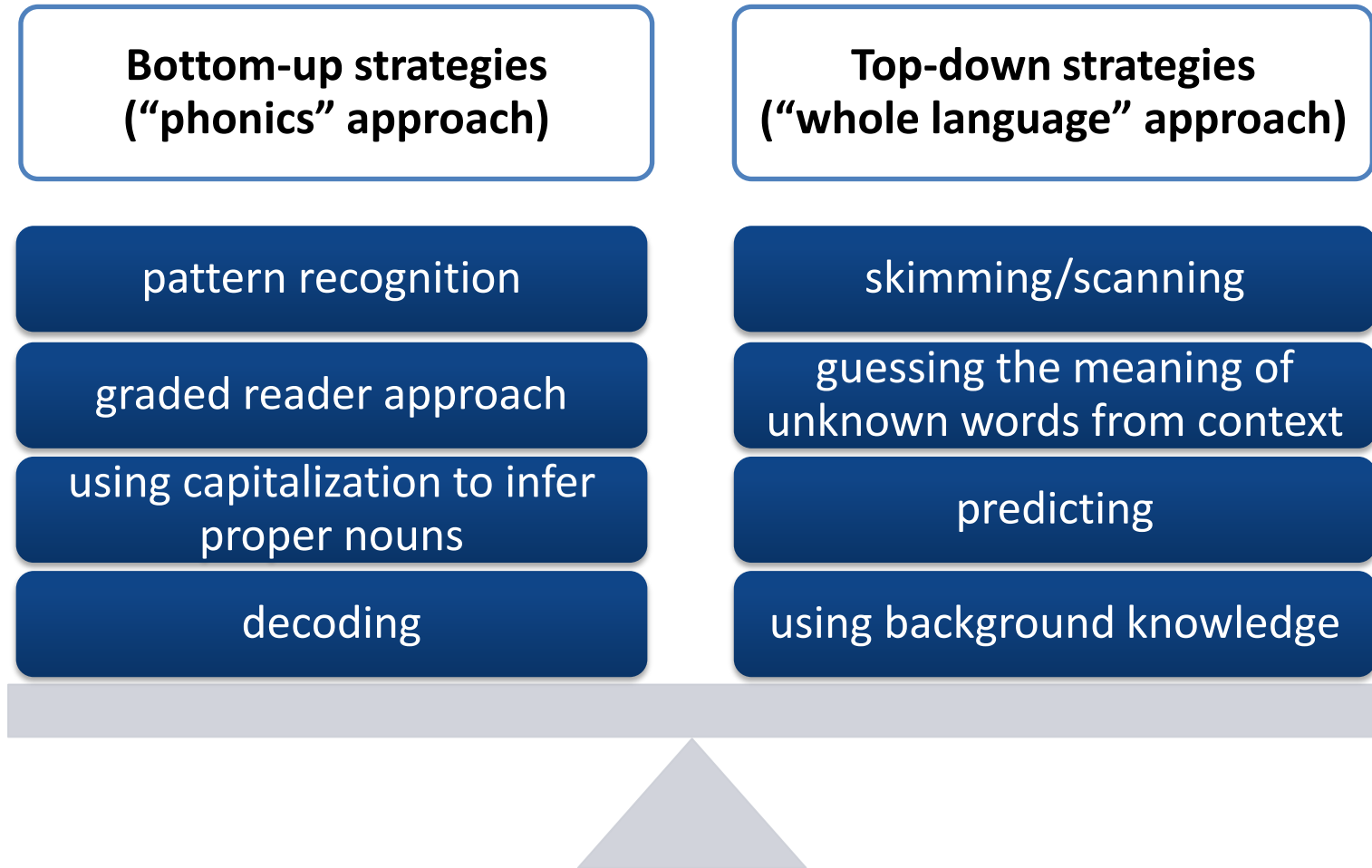
The interactive model

Top down knowledge

- Text source.
- Text design.
- Discourse type.
- Inter-sentential links.
- Sentence structure.
- Clause structure.
- Words.
- Word structure.
- Letter sound relationships.
- Letter.

Bottom up knowledge

- Knowledge of the world.
- General, topic, sociocultural.

Interaction ("balance") of bottom-up and top-down strategies

Bottom-up strategies ("phonics" approach)

Top-down strategies ("whole language" approach)

Bottom-up	Top-down
pattern recognition	skimming/scanning
graded reader approach	guessing the meaning of unknown words from context
using capitalization to infer proper nouns	predicting
decoding	using background knowledge

Summarising our understanding of reading (1/2)

In reading, the goal is always **comprehension of meaning.**

Reading is an **active process** using our:

- knowledge of the world (non-visual information),

- knowledge of language (visual information),

to construct meaning.

Summarising our understanding of reading (2/2)

The key to reading is **prediction.**

We use our knowledge of the world and of language to predict what will come next. We test our predictions by reading some of the text and then checking if what we are reading makes sense. If it makes sense we continue reading, if not we go back and revise our predictions.

The more knowledge and experience we have on which to base our predictions, the less we need to rely on print.

Task 2

- In task 1, the extract was taken from a children´s book ("The BFG",) by Roald Dahl (2001). Based on your knowledge of this genre, list some of the main characteristics of this genre. Focus on text design/layout, discourse type, discourse features, grammatical features.

How does knowledge of genres help in the reading process?

- Text types differ in terms of their communicative functions, the way information is organised and presented, in their syntax, grammar and vocabulary and in the way ideas are related to each other.

- Readers have knowledge of a vast array of text types and their distinctive characteristics. This knowledge enables them to approach the text with some degree of familiarity and adjust their reading expectations and skills to the particular text.

Text types (1/3)

- Calendars.
- Addresses.
- Phone books.
- Name cards.
- Bank statements.
- Credit cards.
- Maps.
- Anecdotes.
- Weather forecast.

- Pamphlets.
- Product labels.
- Washing instructions.
- Short stories.
- Novels.
- Plays.
- Poems.
- Handbooks.
- Clothes size labels.

Text types (2/3)

- Graffiti on walls.
- Children's scribbling.
- Informal letters.
- Business letters.
- Rules and regulations.
- Electronic mail.
- Telegrams.
- Fax messages.
- Junk mail.

- Postcards.
- Credit cards.
- Comic books.
- Newspapers.
- Diplomas.
- Application forms.
- Store catalogues.
- Magazines.
- Radio/TV guides.

Text types (3/3)

- Advertisements.
- Posters.
- Travel guides.
- Cookbooks.
- Repair manuals.
- Memos.
- Time schedules.
- Street signs.
- Syllabi.

- Journal articles.
- Song lyrics.
- Film subtitles.
- Diagrams.
- Flowcharts.
- Name tags (adapted from Gebhard, 1996: 189).

Task 3

- What are the purposes for reading? In order to help you in your answer think, why would you read a newspaper, a poem, a telephone directory, a manual, an encyclopedia, tour guides.

How does the purpose of reading influence the skills we employ?

- Readers do not approach all texts in the same way; they adjust their reading style according to the purpose they have for reading. The text type also influences our purpose for reading.

Reading purposes (1/2)

- To obtain information.
- To respond to curiosity about a topic.
- To follow instructions to perform some task.
- For pleasure, amusement and personal enjoyment.
- To keep in touch with friends and colleagues.
- To know what is happening in the world (through newspapers, magazines etc.).

Reading purposes (2/2)

- To find out when and where things are happening.

- To extend/enrich our existing knowledge base. (Adapted from Hedge, 2001; Rivers and Temperley, 1978.)

How do good readers read?

- Depending on their reading purpose and the type of text, good readers choose the most appropriate reading strategy(-ies).

- We read different things in different ways. The reading strategies we use depend on what we are reading and our purpose for reading it.

Strategies that effective readers employ (1/4)

- Recognise words quickly.

- Use text features (i.e. headings, subheadings, pictures) to predict the content of a text.

- Deduce the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items by using contextual clues.

- Read at different speeds for different purposes.

- Understand information when not explicitly stated.

Strategies that effective readers employ (2/4)

- Distinguish main ideas from minor ones.

- Identify the salient points in a text to summarise.

- Distinguish between fact and opinion.

- Use prior knowledge to work out the meanings within a text.

- Understand the relationships between parts of the text from the use of connectives.

Strategies that effective readers employ (3/4)

- Skimming (quickly reading through a text to get the gist).

- Scanning (quickly searching a text for a particular piece of information).

- Identify the main point in a piece of discourse.

- Use a dictionary well and understand its limitations.

Strategies that effective readers employ (4/4)

- Use context to build meaning and aid comprehension.

- Continue reading even when unsuccessful, at least for a while.

- Adjust strategies to the purpose of reading. (Adapted from Munby, 1978, and Aebersold and Field, 1997.)

Task 4

Which strategies would you use if:

- you wanted to find a telephone number in the directory ?

- your level is intermediate, and you wanted to find out what a British newspaper opinion towards the Olympic games?

- your level is pre-intermediate and you want to decide which places to visit in London through a tour guide?

Planning your reading lesson

- What you will do with the students before the reading.

- What you and the students will do while (during) the reading is going on.

- What you will do after the text has been read. (Gibbons, 2002, p. 84.)

Pre reading stage

- This stage is used to prepare student for the reading. It aims to activate students' schematic and language knowledge and to ensure that reading is purposeful.

- Pre- reading activities should always aim to develop knowledge related to the overall meaning of the text. They are not meant to deal with every potential difficulty.

This stage can be used to:

- Orient the students to the context of the text.

- Prepare the students for the content of the text.

- Establish a purpose for reading.

- Activate background knowledge.

- Encourage students to express an attitude about the topic.

- Become familiar with some of the language of the text.

Types of pre-reading activities

- Brainstorming.

- talking about pictures accompanying a text.

- predicting content from title.

- answering a set of questions or a quiz.

- discussing the topic.

- Identifying genre.

- Learning key vocabulary.

The stages of a reading lesson: The while-reading stage

- The aim of this stage is to encourage learners to be active, flexible and reflective readers. This stage is used to practise and develop a range of reading strategies.

- The purpose of while reading activities is to model good reading strategies and to examine how the text achieves its purpose.

- While-reading activities focus on the process of understanding rather than the result of reading.

In this stage students can be encouraged to:

- Follow the order of ideas in a text.

- React to opinions in a text.

- Confirm expectations or prior knowledge.

- Predict the next part of the text from various clues.

- Distinguish fact from opinion.

- Distinguish major from minor ideas etc.

Types of while-reading activities

- Multiple choice.
- Fill in the blanks.
- True-false.
- Matching.
- Sequencing.

- Completing a table.
- Sorting/grouping.
- Answering questions.
- Writing a reflection.

Reading comprehension questions (1/2)

- Questions for literal comprehension. (Answers directly and explicitly available in the text).

- Questions involving reorganization or reinterpretation. (Require students to obtain literal information from various parts of the text and put it together or reinterpret it).

- Questions for inferences. (What is not explicitly stated but implied).

Reading comprehension questions (2/2)

- Questions for evaluation or appreciation. (making a judgement about the text in terms of what the writer is trying to convey).

- Questions for personal responses. (Reader's reaction to the content of the text).

The post reading stage (1/2)

- Post-reading tasks should provide the students with opportunities to relate what they have read to what they already know or what they feel.

- Tasks in this stage should encourage students to check and discuss activities done while reading so that students can make use of what they have read in a meaningful way.

The post reading stage (2/2)

- In addition, post-reading tasks should enable students to produce language based on what they have learned.

- They provide an excellent opportunity to integrate skills.

Purposes of post reading stage activities

- To use the now-familiar text as a basis for language study.

- To allow students to respond creatively to the text (through art, drama and/or writing activities).

- To focus more deeply on information in the text by representing the information in a different form (e.g. time line, diagram etc.).

Types of post reading activities

- Critical analysis and evaluation.

- Summarising/paraphrasing.

- Language work.

- Integrated activities.

Reproducing the text

- Tell part of the story from these prompts:
    - A doctor – village – annoyed.
    - People – stop – street – advice.
    - Never paid – never – money – made up his mind – put and end.

Role Play

- Act out the conversation between the doctor and the young man.

- Act out an interview between a journalist and the doctor.

Gap-filling

- One day the doctor _____ by a young man. The doctor _____ to be interested. He felt the young man _____ in the street with his tongue _____ out.

False summary & writing

- The teacher provides a summary with some wrong information, and asks the students to correct it.

- Writing based on what the students have read, e.g. producing a tourist brochure, an advertisement, a short summary, etc.

Approaches to the development of reading skills (1/2)

Extensive Approach:

The assumption behind this approach is that if students read large quantities of reading materials of their own choosing, their ability to read will constantly improve. In this approach most of the reading is done outside the classroom without teacher support. The text is always read for comprehension of main ideas not for every detail and word.

Approaches to the development of reading skills (2/2)

Intensive Approach:

Reading is done in the classroom. Each text is read thoroughly for maximum comprehension. Intensive reading is used to teach and practice a range of reading skills/strategies. Teachers provide direction and students complete tasks before, during and after reading.

Principles of teaching reading

- The teaching of reading should focus on developing students' **reading skills** and **strategies** rather than testing students' reading comprehension.

- Provide students opportunities to read a **variety of texts.**

- Provide students with tasks that have a **realistic/authentic purpose.**

- Design tasks that develop a **variety of reading skills.**

- Work on bottom-up recognition skills and on top-down interpretation skills.

References (1/2)

Aebersold, J. A., & Field, M. L. (1997). *From reader to reading teacher: Issues and strategies for second language classrooms*. Cambridge University Press.

Gebhard, J.G. (1996). *Teaching English as a Foreign Language: A Teacher Self-Development and Methodology Guide.* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Gibbons, P. (2002). *Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning: Teaching second language learners in the mainstream classroom* . Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

References (2/2)

Goodman, K. (1970). Reading as a psychologistic guessing game. In H. Singer and R. b. Ruddell . (Eds). *Theoretical models and Processes of Reading*. Newark, N.J.: International reading Association.

Hedge, T. (2001). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom* (Vol. 106). Oxford,, UK: Oxford University Press.

Rivers, W. M., & Temperley, M. S. (1978). *A Practical Guide to the Teaching of English as a Second or Foreign Language*. Oxford University Press, 200 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016.

Munby, J. (1978). *Communicative syllabus design: a sociolinguistic model for defining the content of purpose-specific language programmers*. Cambridge University Press.

End of Unit

Financing

- The present educational material has been developed as part of the educational work of the instructor.

- The project "Open Academic Courses of the University of Athens" has only financed the reform of the educational material.

- The project is implemented under the operational program "Education and Lifelong Learning" and funded by the European Union (European Social Fund) and National Resources.

Notes

Note on History of Published Version

The present work is the edition 1.0.

Reference Note

Licensing Note

The current material is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International license or later International Edition. The individual works of third parties are excluded, e.g. photographs, diagrams etc. They are contained therein and covered under their conditions of use in the section «Use of Third Parties Work Note».

[1] http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

As Non-Commercial is defined the use that:

- Does not involve direct or indirect financial benefits from the use of the work for the distributor of the work and the license holder.
- Does not include financial transaction as a condition for the use or access to the work.
- Does not confer to the distributor and license holder of the work indirect financial benefit (e.g. advertisements) from the viewing of the work on website .

The copyright holder may give to the license holder a separate license to use the work for commercial use, if requested.

Preservation Notices

Any reproduction or adaptation of the material should include:

- the Reference Note,

- the Licensing Note,

- the declaration of Notices Preservation,

- the Use of Third Parties Work Note (if available),

together with the accompanied URLs.