

READING STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE READING COMPREHENSION

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SUMMARY

Ineffective reading takes place if the reader does not understand what he reads. Therefore it is important for everybody to be able to make sense of what they read.

Teachers often do not pay enough attention to the teaching of comprehension in schools. Reading comprehension is an aspect that has been the least adequately explained and therefore it is the most difficult one to teach. Even students think of it as only another exercise of English and rush through it just to finish as soon as possible. Teachers hand back the exercises and give the correct answers without instructing students on how to improve their comprehension.

By teaching students different reading strategies their proficiency in comprehension may improve. Most of the students are unaware of reading strategies and they don't know how to implement them in their comprehension.

This study offers an empirical investigation into the teaching of four specific reading strategies to students in an attempt to help them to improve their reading comprehension. The literature on language learning strategies and reading strategies, as well as the teaching and learning of reading strategies, is surveyed. The results of an empirical investigation into the teaching of four reading strategies (guessing the meaning of the word from the context, finding the main idea in a passage, making inferences and generalizing) indicate that, although there was only a marginal improvement in reading comprehension, it is clear that the teaching of reading strategies has enormous potential. English Second Language teachers may find it worth their while to implement the teaching of reading strategies to develop their students' proficiency in reading comprehension.

Key words:

*reading comprehension; language learning strategies;
reading strategies; learning strategies.*

OPSOMMING

Ondoeltreffende lees vind plaas as die leser nie verstaan wat hy lees nie. Daarom is dit belangrik dat elkeen begryp wat hy lees.

Die probleem is dat onderwysers nie genoeg aandag aan die onderrig van begripstoetse in skole gee nie. Begripstoets is die afdeling wat die minste verduidelik word en dit is die moeilikste aspek om te onderrig. Selfs leerlinge dink dit is maar net nog 'n afdeling of oefening in Engels en jaag daardeur om dit so gou as moontlik klaar te kry. Onderwysers gee die oefeninge terug en gee die korrekte antwoorde sonder om leerlinge te leer hoe om begrip te verbeter.

Deur leerlinge verskillende leesstrategieë te leer, kan hulle begripsvermoë verbeter word. Die meeste leerlinge is onbewus van leesstrategieë en weet nie hoe om dit in begripstoetse te implementeer nie.

Hierdie studie bied 'n empiriese ondersoek oor die leer van vier spesifieke leesstrategieë aan leerlinge in 'n poging om hulle te help om hul begripsvermoë te verbeter. 'n Literatuurstudie oor taalleer en leesstrategieë word gedoen, asook die onderrig en leer van leesstrategieë. Die resultate van die empiriese studie ondersoek die onderrig van vier leesstrategieë (raai die betekenis van 'n woord met behulp van die konteks, vind die hoofgedagte van 'n paragraaf, gevolgtrekkings maak en veralgemening) dui aan dat al was daar net 'n effense verbetering in die begripsvermoë, is dit duidelik dat die onderrig van leesstrategieë geweldige potensiaal het.

Engelse taalonderwysers kan dit die moeite werd vind om die onderrig van leesstrategieë te implementeer om leerlinge se vermoë en begrip van leesstof te verbeter.

Sleutelwoorde:

*begripstoets; taalleerstrategieë;
leesstrategieë; leerstrategieë.*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PROBLEM DEFINED

Reading is ineffective if the reader does not understand what he reads. It is therefore very important to be able to make sense of what one reads. The development of reading comprehension is often not given sufficient attention at schools (Kugel, 1990:28). Duffy et al. (1984:26) explain the problem as follows: "*of all aspects of reading, comprehension has been the least adequately explained and, as a result, the most difficult to teach*". Personal experience has taught that a reading comprehension exercises is often regarded as just another exercise by secondary school students, thinking it unimportant and rushing through it in an attempt to complete it as quickly as possible. Teachers are just as guilty because they often hand out the results and provide only the correct answers, but never instruct students on how they can improve their comprehension abilities (Cashdan, 1979:43). Garner (1987:105) states that

if a particular activity is an important component, then teaching [students] who do not use that component to do so, should improve their performance.

Teachers should *teach* students to understand the text, not merely be interested in establishing whether they understand the text or not (Mackay et al., 1979:144). In particular, assisting students means teaching them to make use of different reading strategies in order to improve comprehension.

The reading strategies that students use may influence their results on a reading comprehension exercise. Many students use reading strategies intuitively; others are either unaware of these strategies and/or don't know how to use them. However, knowing a strategy and applying it in reading comprehension, may positively influence a student's comprehension of language (Richards, 1990:43).

Because students are individuals, each one may comprehend in his own way. The fact that students have different backgrounds and frames of reference is likely to influence their

use of reading strategies. A wide variety of reading strategies are used by students, and researchers have identified a number of them. This study will focus on four of the most common reading strategies, namely:

- guessing the meaning of words from the context;
- identifying the main idea in a passage;
- making inferences; and
- generalizing.

If problems experienced with reading comprehension are taken into account, the following question arises:

Can teaching of the above-mentioned reading strategies help to improve the reading comprehension of secondary school students?

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The aim of this study is to determine whether the teaching of the four strategies listed above contribute to the improvement of reading comprehension.

1.3 HYPOTHESIS

The use of selected reading strategies has a statistically as well as practically significant influence on reading comprehension.

1.4 METHOD OF RESEARCH

A review of the literature on learning, language learning and reading strategies and the teaching of reading strategies was conducted. An empirical study was then conducted. For the purpose of this investigation two Std 7 classes consisting of 30 students each, were used as subjects. A quasi-experimental, non-randomized, pre-test-post-test design was used for this study.

1.5 PROGRAMME OF STUDY

In Chapter 2 learning strategies in general are explored. A brief survey of how researchers define and classify strategies is provided. Do students use these strategies consciously or unconsciously? What knowledge do they have of the use of strategies?

In Chapter 3 language learning strategies are examined. Factors which influence the selection and use of these strategies are surveyed. These strategies are classified and examples are given.

In Chapter 4 reading is defined and the reasons why some students find reading difficult are explored. Comprehension, as well as the way in which schema theory is utilized, is explained. This chapter also includes a definition of reading strategies and comprehension. Students' knowledge of reading strategies is also defined and explored.

In Chapter 5 the teaching and learning of reading strategies and the factors that influence or play a role in teaching them are looked at. Guidelines for teaching are provided. Instruction and planning, as well as the effect they have on teaching and learning, are discussed. The methodology for teaching reading strategies is explored and methods for teaching and learning of strategies are suggested.

Chapter 6 describes the research method used in this study.

Chapter 7 discusses the results of the empirical study and their implications for the teaching of reading strategies.

The last chapter concludes the study and makes recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2
LEARNING STRATEGIES: AN INTRODUCTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Strategies may be used by students to attain desired levels of performance in learning. To be able to use these strategies, students must be familiar with these strategies and know how to use them.

In this chapter learning strategies are briefly introduced. Learning strategies are defined and illustrated, and various classification systems are explored. Students' knowledge of learning strategies, the way in which they employ them, and whether they use strategies consciously or not, are discussed.

2.2 DEFINITION OF LEARNING STRATEGIES

Researchers have defined learning strategies in various ways. According to Oxford (1990:1) and Oxford and Crookall (1989:414), learning strategies are the "*steps taken by students to enhance and aid the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information*". Rubin (1975:43) also states that learning strategies are the techniques or devices students use to acquire knowledge.

Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:25) postulate that a learning strategy consists of a string of interrelated skills. A learning strategy is used with a particular purpose in mind and is always goal-oriented. Stern (1992:261) adds that learners consciously engage in these activities as they exercise certain procedures and undertake some form of long-term planning.

Learning strategies are mental processes. Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:26) see learning strategies as the process underlying performance in thinking tasks, while Weinstein et al. (1988:237) describe them as "*the various mental operations that students use to facilitate learning*". They are therefore behaviours that influence the manner in which students process information. This newly processed information becomes part of the organized

knowledge base that can be accessed in future to recall and apply information. Strategies are used to give meaning to information. Oxford and Nyikos (1989:291) point out that.

learning strategies help students to assimilate new information into their own existing mental structures, thus creating increasingly rich and complex schemata.

Learning strategies are therefore **important methods or mental operations for acquiring knowledge** with a specific purpose in mind and are used to **increase and facilitate learning**. Strategies can make learning more efficient and effective.

Ellis (1994:530) points out that there are various problems related to the definition of learning strategies:

- Researchers do not agree if a strategy is to be perceived as behavioural, or as mental, or as both.
- It is difficult to determine the precise nature of the behaviours that are to count as learning strategies.
- Some researchers say students use strategies consciously and others say subconsciously. There are also researchers who argue that a consciously used strategy can evolve into one used subconsciously.

2.3 CLASSIFICATION OF LEARNING STRATEGIES

Various proposals for the classification of learning strategies have been made. Three examples will be given here.

Pintrich (1989:118) distinguishes three categories of learning strategies, namely:

- **Cognitive strategies** - assisting students to encode new material, organise and retrieve information.
- **Metacognitive strategies** - assisting students in the planning, regulating, monitoring and modifying of their cognitive processes.

- **Resource management** - assisting students to control available resources.

Kirby (1984:115-116) divides learning strategies into four categories:

- **Macrostrategies** are general ways in which a student will order and relate data regarding a particular task. Tobias (1982:5) calls these activities reviewing, note-taking and comprehension-monitoring which help the processing of the instructional input.
- **Mesostrategies** are a student's learning style and study strategies for specific academic performance.
- **Microstrategies** are closely related to the nature of the given task. These strategies are transferable in different tasks, for example, a student can write an essay even though topics are not always the same. Tobias (1982:6) states that this level contains the basic cognitive processes. Paying attention to and encoding information are the two activities of importance.
- **Affective or encoding strategies** indicate the student's perception of a task. There are direct links between motivation (affection) and performance (encoding), as both incorporate the student's values, beliefs in self-efficacy, and motives.

Weinstein et al.'s (1988:20) classification includes three types of strategies: repetition, elaboration and organization.

- **Repetition** - the simple recall or identification of important information. This strategy is important in the early stages of building a base of knowledge in a specific area.
- **Elaboration** - students build bridges between what they already know and what they are trying to learn. The use of prior knowledge makes that which they are trying to learn more meaningful and memorable, as they compare and contrast old and new information.
- **Organization** - this strategy is used for the transformation and translation of information into other forms or schemes to provide structures for new information. It is easier to remember structured information than isolated bits. A complex task

becomes more meaningful and manageable with the use of organizational strategies.

Within these three classes Weinstein et al. (1988:316-325) identify eight categories, each having a basic and a complex level. The basic level represents low-order activities, while the complex level comprises interpretation and application of the strategies. These categories are:

- **Basic rehearsal** - repeating and remembering items from an ordered list.
- **Complex rehearsal** - copying, underlining and shadowing the main event in a story.
- **Basic elaboration** - forming mental images about phrases and sentences.
- **Complex elaboration** - paraphrasing, summarizing and describing new information about existing knowledge.
- **Basic organization** - grouping and ordering of that which is to be learned.
- **Complex organization** - outlining a passage or creating a hierarchy.
- **Comprehension monitoring** - checking for comprehension failures by self-questioning.
- **Affection and motivation** - being alert and relaxed to help overcome test anxiety and reducing external distractions when studying.

It is clear that even though Weinstein et al. (1988) and Pintrich (1989) use different categories, they share similar ideas. Monitoring of working methods seems to be regarded as important. Organization of learning is also regarded as important. It helps students plan their work so that they are to retrieve information quickly and learn effectively.

2.4 EXAMPLES OF LEARNING STRATEGIES

Researchers seem to have differing ideas on what should be regarded as learning strategies, but a consensus seems to be emerging. The following are examples of learning strategies:

- **Repetition** - imitating a model, including overt practice and silent rehearsal.
- **Resourcing** - using reference materials.
- **Directed physical response** - relating new information to physical actions as with directions.
- **Grouping** - re-ordering and re-classifying material to be learned.
- **Note-taking** - writing down the main ideas and important points as well as giving outlines or summaries of the information.
- **Deduction** - conscious application of rules.
- **Recombination** - combining known elements in a new way.
- **Imagery** - relating new information to visual concepts in memory.
- **Auditory representation** - retaining of a sound or a similar sound for a word or phrase.
- **Elaboration** - relating new information to existing concepts.
- **Transferring** - using previously acquired knowledge to facilitate new learning.
- **Inferencing** - using available information to guess meanings of new items and predict outcomes.

- **Asking for clarification** - asking a teacher to repeat information, paraphrasing, explaining or collecting examples.

2.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING STRATEGIES

Strategies must have certain characteristics which proclaim their status as learning strategies. Weinstein et al. (1988:17) suggest that learning strategies should be:

- **goal directed** - to meet a specific standard of performance or reach a specific learning goal;
- **intentionally evoked** - and consciously or unconsciously selected (cf 2.6.1). The selection is determined by factors such as students' prior experiences with the strategy and similar learning tasks; their ability to deal with distractions; and their commitment to their goals;
- **effortful** - requiring time and highly interactive steps. Students must be motivated to initiate and maintain strategy use. They must also believe that the use of the strategy will be effective and successful; and
- **situation-specific**. The goals, task requirements and context interact to help determine which strategy will be best for the task.

2.6 STUDENTS' USE OF STRATEGIES

2.6.1 Conscious or subconscious use of strategies

It is difficult to determine whether students use learning consciously or subconsciously, as researchers are divided on this topic.

Garner (1987:107) argues that students produce strategic activities that assist successful task performance spontaneously, but he adds a warning:

if students do not acquire information about when, where, as well as how, to use strategies, they are likely to apply

routines in rote fashion in both appropriate and inappropriate instances.

Weinstein et al. (1988:17-21) indicate that students use learning strategies intentionally, which implies at least some level of active selection. This indicates that students must have a knowledge of strategies and their use to be able to make a choice. Weinstein et al. (1988) add that successful selection of strategies depends on the extent to which students know themselves and the characteristics of the task to be performed. Both aspects (knowing oneself and task characteristics) must be taken into account in selecting appropriate learning strategies for a specific learning context.

Weinstein et al. (1988:18) also point out that students should not only be familiar with different strategies for specific tasks, but should also know how to use them, and the conditions under which it is appropriate to use them. Students must also want to use strategies and believe that they can use them successfully, i.e. that using strategies has value. Weinstein et al. seem to believe that learning strategies are used consciously.

Pressley (1986:140) sees knowledge of strategic procedures as the fundamental component in strategy use. Strategies are aimed at specific goals and good strategies are composed of sufficient and necessary processes for accomplishing students' intended goals. He says that although strategy use is not always conscious, strategies are always potentially both conscious and controllable. Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:26) mention that strategies are not always carried out at a conscious or deliberate level.

These views indicate that it is not always possible to determine whether strategies are used consciously or not. It seems as if strategies can be used either consciously or subconsciously. It may be that what starts out to be a conscious strategy may later evolve into a subconscious one (Ellis, 1994:532). The focus in the next section is on conscious strategy use, as the purpose of strategy training is to inform students about strategies and how to use them consciously or deliberately.

2.6.2 Students' conscious use of learning strategies

Students can use learning strategies to plan work and performance. Subsequently, they can make an assessment of what they have done and evaluate their work at completion. Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:38) point out that, for a deliberate selection of which

strategies to use, there are three important aspects to keep in mind, viz cognitive goals, metacognition and cognitive actions:

- The cognitive goals are the **tasks** the students have to complete.
- **Metacognitive experiences** include what students experience while they are performing the tasks, metacognitive knowledge of themselves, the tasks they have to do, and strategy variables.
- Cognitive actions are the **strategies** students can employ to perform tasks.

According to Nisbet and Shucksmith all these are related. The student's knowledge of different facets of cognition and strategies develop at an early age and broaden as he approaches adolescence. What seems to be absent in young children, however, is the ability to utilize that knowledge and produce those strategies spontaneously when faced with a cognitive goal (Nisbet & Shucksmith, 1986:42).

The relevant strategies for a specific task will depend on a student's perception of the task. A good learner will probably choose the right strategy for the task. Proficient students consciously select strategies that work well together (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992:14). The strategy selected depends on the student's perception of that which is required of him in the learning situation.

To be able to select strategies, students must be aware of their own characteristics as learners, as well as the characteristics of the tasks they are expected to perform. They must therefore be aware of different types of learning strategies (Weinstein et al., 1988:17). Students' knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses, the nature and requirements of the task at hand and interaction with their knowledge help them to select and use appropriate learning strategies effectively and efficiently. Information about themselves and the task parameters are essential for setting specific, realistic and challenging goals (Weinstein et al., 1988:18). Weinstein et al. (1998:4) state that the personal perceptions students have of themselves may have an impact on their studying and learning, and they can help them to plan or allocate the resources needed.

Weinstein et al. (1988:18) also state that self-knowledge of how they learn and prior knowledge of the content and subject to be studied are very important for students. Successful students know a lot about themselves and

- the learning styles they prefer;
- the degree of difficulty of the subjects they study, and
- the best or worst time of the day for studying.

Students must also be aware of specific task requirements and in particular, the requirements of every academic task and how to deal with it. They must also know that for every specific task a specific learning strategy applies.

Weinstein et al. (1988:2) point out that students who choose and use strategies are able to take much of the responsibility for managing their own learning. They are not passive participants in the educational process; they want to become more self-regulated. Students using strategies know how to integrate and orchestrate their knowledge, thought processes, motivational levels, and the actions needed for reaching a learning goal.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Learning can be improved by the employment of different learning strategies. There are various types of strategies. Students may find it problematic to choose an appropriate strategy. Dreyer (1992:61) states that the problem lies in deciding which strategies are fundamental to and useful for learning. She adds that in spite of the problems related to the definition and classification of learning strategies, researchers agree that learning strategies are important for learning.

Teachers can teach the use of various strategies in an attempt to improve learning in their students. If students don't know how and when strategies are used, they cannot benefit from them and use them to improve learning.

The concept of language learning strategies is an extension of that of general learning strategies, and has received a great deal of attention in recent years. Oxford and Crookall (1989:413) point out that the use of language learning strategies can improve the proficiency of students in a second or foreign language. Language learning strategies are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The use of strategies are important in language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement essential for developing communicative competence in a second or foreign language (Oxford, 1990:1). This chapter focuses on language learning strategies.

3.2 DEFINITION OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Language learning strategies differ from learning strategies in virtually only one important aspect: they are used for a specific purpose, *viz* language learning.

A distinction is often made between three types of strategies - production, communication, and learning (Ellis, 1994:530).

- A **production** strategy is used when students attempt to use the linguistic system efficiently and clearly with minimum effort.
- A **communication** strategy is used when students attempt to deal with problems that have arisen in interaction with other students.
- A **learning** strategy is used when students attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language.

The focus of this study is on the last one, learning strategies. Ellis (1994:531) makes a distinction between two types of learning strategies: learning strategies and skill learning strategies. The first one is concerned with students' attempts to master new linguistic and sociolinguistic information about the target language. Skill learning strategies are concerned with students' attempts to become skilled listeners, speakers, readers and writers. In practice, however, it is not easy to distinguish between the two.

Expanding on his initial definition of learning strategies to incorporate the concept of language learning strategies, Stern (1983:405) states that language learning strategies are the general tendencies or overall characteristics of the approach employed by the language learner in acquiring an unfamiliar language. Brown (1994:114) points out that language learning strategies are the moment-by-moment techniques that learners employ to solve 'problems' posed by second language input and output.

Ellis (1994:533) points out that definitions of language strategies tend to be ad hoc and atheoretical. However, attempts have been made to ground the study of learning strategies within the information-processing model of learning developed by Anderson (1983). Anderson distinguishes three stages of skill-learning:

- the **cognitive stage**, where the learner is involved in conscious activity resulting in declarative knowledge.
- the **associative stage**, where the learner strengthens the connections among the various elements or components of the skills and constructs more efficient production sets.
- the **automatic stage**, where execution becomes more or less autonomous and subconscious.

Ellis (1994:533) points out that Anderson's theory provides for two interpretations of the term "*strategy*". One is that strategies only occur in the early cognitive stage when they are conscious; they cease to be "*strategic*" when they are performed automatically. The other view is that strategies occur in all three stages of development. They take the form of production sets (i.e. 'if ... then' statements). For example, the strategy of inferencing has this form: "*If the goal is to comprehend an oral or written text, and I am unable to identify the meaning of a word, then I will try to infer the meaning from the context.*" Initially, such sets exist only in declarative form: they are conscious and can only be accessed through controlled processing. Gradually, they are proceduralized, until a point is reached where the learner is no longer conscious of employing them. Ellis (1994:533) concludes that, for research purposes, therefore, strategies can be defined as production sets that exist as declarative knowledge and are used to solve some learning problem.

3.3 CLASSIFICATION OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Language learning strategies can be classified in different ways. Ellis (1994:535-540) provides an overview of different classification systems of language learning strategies.

O'Malley et al. (1985) distinguish three major types of strategy:

- **Cognitive strategies** are the steps used in problem-solving that require direct analysis, transformation or synthesis of learning materials. Among these strategies are repetition, note-taking, and elaboration. Cognitive strategies appear to be directly linked to the performance of particular learning tasks.
- **Metacognitive strategies** make use of knowledge about cognitive processes and constitute an attempt to regulate language learning by means of planning, monitoring and evaluating. Examples are direct attention and self-management.
- **Social or affective strategies** concern the ways in which learners elect to interact with other learners and native speakers. Examples are 'cooperation' (working with one or more peers to obtain feedback, pool information or model a language activity) and 'question for clarification' (asking a teacher or other native speaker for repetition, paraphrase, explanation and/or examples).

Wenden (1983) focuses on what O'Malley et al. call metacognitive strategies. She identifies three general categories of self-directing strategies:

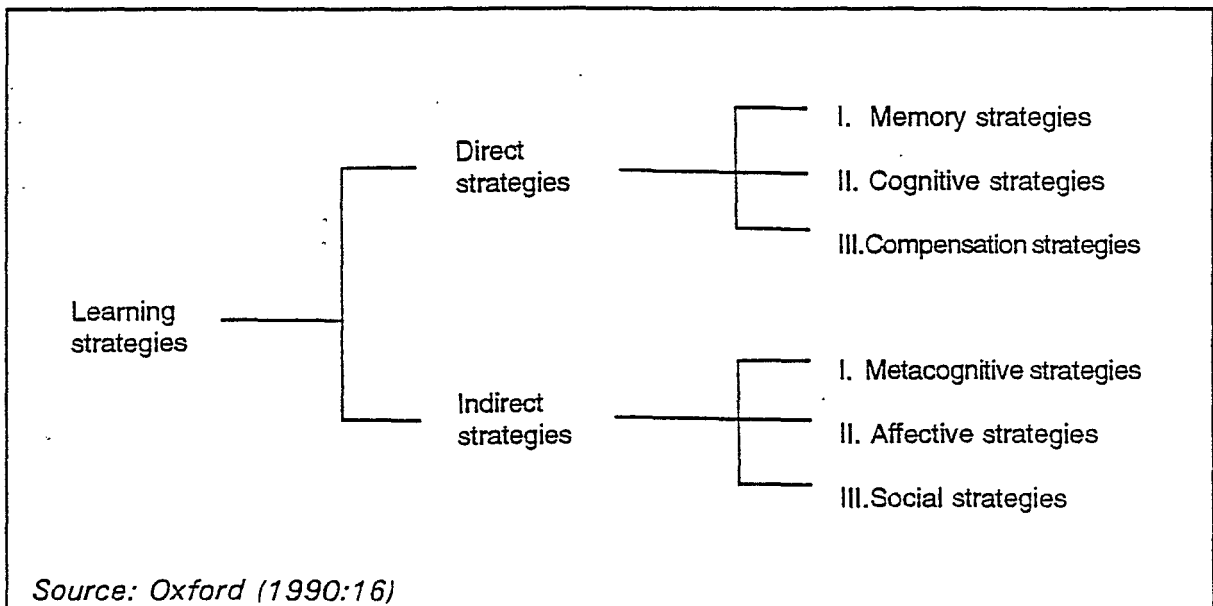
- **knowing about language** (relating to what language and language learning involves),
- **planning** (relating to the what and how of language learning),
- **self-evaluation** (relating to progress in learning and the learner's response to the language experience).

Wenden (1991:105) found that adult learners pose questions relating to each category and then take decisions depending on the kind of answers they come up with. For example, in the planning category, learners might ask 'What should I learn and how?' and then go back and decide on linguistic objectives, resources, and use of sources (Ellis, 1994:539). Wenden's framework was devised as a basis for training in the use of learning strategies.

The most comprehensive classification of learning strategies to date is that provided by Oxford (1990). Oxford built on the earlier classifications with the aim of subsuming within her taxonomy virtually every strategy previously mentioned in the literature (Ellis, 1994:539).

Oxford (1990:37) makes a general distinction between direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies involve the target language and they require a mental processing of language. Indirect strategies provide support for language learning by means of focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety and increasing cooperation and empathy. Direct and indirect strategies have a number of subcategories; these are shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: DIAGRAM OF A STRATEGY SYSTEM



Memory strategies often involve pairing different types of material. In language learning it is possible to give verbal labels to pictures, or to create visual images of words or phrases. Linking the verbal with the visual is very useful to language learning for four reasons. First, the mind's storage capacity for visual information exceeds its capacity for verbal material. Second, the most efficiently packaged chunks of information are transferred to long-term memory through visual images. Third, visual images may be the most potent device to aid recall of verbal material. Fourth, a large proportion of learners have a preference for visual learning (Oxford, 1990:40). Memory strategies include strategies such as creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well

and employing actions. They enable students to store verbal material and then retrieve it when needed for communication.

Cognitive strategies are unified by a common function: manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner. The four sets of cognitive strategies that exist are practising, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning and creating structure for input and output. Strategies for practising are among the most important cognitive strategies, as language learners do not always realize how essential practice is. Strategies for receiving and sending messages are necessary tools, as they help learners take advantage of a variety of resources, print and non-print, to understand and produce messages in a new language (Oxford, 1990:44). Many learners, especially adults, tend to 'reason out' a new language, and make use of analyzing and reasoning. Many learners feel a need to structure input and make use of structure-generating strategies such as taking notes, summarizing, and highlighting (Oxford, 1990:45).

Compensation strategies enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge. Compensation occurs not just in understanding the new language but also in producing it. Compensation strategies allow learners to produce spoken or written expression in the new language without complete knowledge. Oxford (1990:47) says that "*compensation strategies are intended to make up for the 'inadequate repertoire' of grammar and vocabulary*".

Metacognitive strategies are actions which go beyond purely cognitive devices and which provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process. Metacognitive strategies include centring one's learning, arranging and planning learning and evaluating learning. Many language learners are overwhelmed by too much "*newness*" (Oxford, 1990:136). They lose their focus, which can only be regained by the conscious use of metacognitive strategies such as paying attention and overviewing already familiar material. These strategies help students to arrange and plan language learning efficiently and effectively.

Affective strategies refer to learners' emotions, attitudes, motivations and values. These strategies lowering one's anxiety, encouraging oneself, and taking one's emotional temperature. Oxford (1990:140) says the affective side of a learner is probably one of the biggest influences on the success or failure of language learning. Positive emotions and attitudes lead to effective and enjoyable language learning. Just as attitudes affect emotions, attitudes and motivation work together to influence language learning

performance itself - including both global language proficiency and proficiency in specific language skills (Oxford, 1990:142).

Language is a form of social behaviour; it is a system for communication, and communication occurs between people. Learning a language thus involves other people and appropriate social strategies are very important in this process. There are three sets of social strategies: asking questions, cooperating with others and empathizing with others. A basic social interaction is asking questions; an action from which learners gain great benefit. Asking questions helps learners get closer to the intended meaning and thus aids their understanding. Cooperation implies the absence of competition and the presence of group spirit. Cooperative learning consistently shows the following significant effects: higher self-esteem, increased confidence and enjoyment, greater and more rapid achievement, more respect for the teacher, the school and the subject, use of higher level cognitive strategies, decreased prejudice and increased altruism and mutual concern (Oxford, 1990:144). Empathy is essential to successful communication in any language. It is especially necessary, although sometimes difficult to achieve, in learning another language.

Ellis (1994:539) points out that Oxford's scheme is marred by a failure to make a clear distinction between strategies directed at learning the second language and those directed at using it. She classifies 'compensation strategies' as a direct type, whereas other researchers treat compensation strategies as distinct from learning strategies.

All the frameworks are used as a basis for studying which strategies or a combination of strategies are effective in promoting learning. Ellis (1994:540) points out that a number of problems remain. The categories that have been established are 'high-inference' in nature, and as a result, their interpretation often requires considerable interpretation on the part of the researcher.

3.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Certain factors will influence the student's choice of strategies. Ellis (1994:545) states:

there is no evidence to suggest that a number of individual learner and situational factors are related to strategy use.

Learners have been found to vary considerably in both the overall frequency with which they employ strategies and also particular types of strategies they use (Ellis, 1994: 540). Generally, student variables affecting strategy use include age, gender, culture and the context in which learning takes place.

3.4.1 Age

Although Dreyer (1992:12) states that the influence of students' ages on learning has caused a great deal of controversy, it is clear that age affects the way strategies are used (Ellis, 1994:541). Kennedy (1970:36) argues that the older the second language learner is, the more factors he has in his favour. These factors are cognitive maturity, a longer attention span and a longer short-term memory. More mature learners often use more complex and sophisticated strategies.

In contrast to this, Faerch et al. (1984:210) are of the opinion that the younger the learner, the easier and better he learns a foreign language. Younger learners often use simple strategies when acquiring a language (Ellis, 1994:541). Faerch et al. (1984:210) also state that successful language acquisition depends on the intensity of learning, the total time spent on the language, the extent to which linguistic skills in the mother tongue are developed, the level of intellectual development and the motivation of the student.

These differences may help to explain why older learners and adults generally learn faster initially than young learners (Ellis, 1994:541). This statement supports Dreyer's (1990) view that conclusions among researchers have been inconsistent and therefore age is considered an aspect which requires more research.

3.4.2 Gender difference

Gender differences also influence the selection of strategies. Oxford (1990:235-247) and Oxford and Nyikos (1989:291-300) examined this phenomenon and found that females make greater use of learning strategies than males. Politzer (1983:54-65) found that females used social learning strategies and formal rule-related practice strategies (Bardwick, 1971:26) significantly more often than males.

Different perceptions of males and females also affect students' perceptual processes and recall (Swaffar, 1988:124). Dreyer (1992:70) stresses the fact that sex differences cannot be ignored but must be examined from both theoretical and practical viewpoints.

3.4.3 Cultural difference

Doughty and Thornton (1973:89) say that a different culture requires different skills from students in order to be able to communicate in the language of that culture. Students from other cultures lack the skills which members of the target language group possess (Oller & Richards, 1973:249). The size, cohesion and status of the culture to which students belong, as well as the relationships between students who have to learn a new language and those who speak the target language, are of enormous importance (Kennedy, 1970:2). Students' perceptions and judgements are influenced by assumptions shared by the unique social groups to which students belong. These perceptions will serve as guidelines for selecting and ordering information (Pritchard, 1990:279).

A culturally unfamiliar text is more difficult to comprehend than one of which the style is familiar to the student. A familiar cultural schema can be more powerful than lexical knowledge (Swaffar, 1988:126). The background knowledge students use to comprehend is often culture-specific. This strong bond between culture and language must be maintained if students are to have complete understanding of the meaning of the language that is used. The differences in values and attitudes are one of the main sources of problems in second or foreign language learning. Culture-specific values may be significant to comprehension if the values expressed in the text differ from those held by the student (Carrel & Eisterhold, 1982:81).

Students want to feel that what they are doing will enable them to communicate with the target group they would like to join, and whose language they would like to learn.

3.4.4 Context

Another aspect that influences learning is context, i.e. the community and surroundings in which students grow up and acquire language. Reinforcements within the context are important for learning and language acquisition. Although reinforcement or the variables that act as reinforcers cannot precisely be defined, two of the most important reinforcers have been found to be approval of parents and peers and the success students have communicating with them. Informal tuition by parents or adults takes place, in context, when they deliberately correct or expand on what children say.

Every student has his own goals. It is important that teachers also have individual goal structures for each student. Students are then able to work towards the completion of

assignments without interaction with other students (Robeck & Wallace, 1990:339). This means that students can complete tasks to the best of their individual abilities, in their own time and by using their own styles. Individual style is also relevant to a student's acquiring a language. It is a sign of membership of and participation in his community.

3.4.5 Attention

Whatever the language teaching environment, a student's attention to language learning strategies can make a significant difference when learning a language. Although it has become fashionable to speak about learner training in the use of strategies, the actual training of students to become better language learners is still being conducted in relatively few places in the world (Cohen, 1990:4). In applying language learning strategies, the student engages in certain activities, uses particular procedures, or employs specific techniques.

3.5 EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STRATEGY USE

The question that arises here is: does the teaching and learning of learning strategies help students learn a language more effectively? Ellis (1994:546-556) provides a review of studies that have investigated this question.

In the so-called 'good language learner' studies two approaches are followed. In one, successful language learners are identified and interviewed and/or asked to complete a written questionnaire. In the other, comparisons of more and less successful learners are made. Ellis (1994:548) says that there are five major aspects of successful language learning:

A concern for language form: There is convincing evidence from the good language learner studies to show that paying attention to the formal properties of the target language contributes to success. Good language learners also attend to meaning and all the researchers in these studies refer to the importance of this aspect in strategy use. In most of the studies, the learners appeared to benefit from attending to both form and meaning.

A concern for communication: Good language learners search for meaning in the second language data they are exposed to and try to engage in real communication by seeking out opportunities for natural language use.

An active task approach: Good language learners also show active involvement in language learning. They appreciate teachers who are systematic, logical and clear, but prefer to treat them as 'informants' rather than to rely on them. Good language learners like to take charge of their own learning by identifying and pursuing goals and by trying to introduce new topics into a conversation.

An awareness of the learning process: Successful learners are thoughtful and aware of themselves in relation to the learning process. They take conscious decisions and they follow their own preferred learning style. They make use of metacognitive knowledge to help them assess their needs, evaluate progress, and give direction to their learning. Such awareness gives learners control over their own learning.

Flexible and appropriate use of language strategies: Good language learners use a greater range of strategies and have an ability to choose strategies that are appropriate for particular tasks. They are also more purposeful in their approach, engaged in 'comprehension monitoring' to a greater extent than in 'production monitoring' and they make extensive use of their general knowledge as well as second language linguistic knowledge.

Studying good language learners has proved a useful way of investigating how strategies affect language learning. The limitations to these studies are that they have focused mainly on classroom learners and the 'good' strategies that have been identified necessarily reflect the formal learning setting. The main methods of collecting data - learners' verbal reports - may give an advantage to the learner who is able to talk about language learning skilfully. It is also not clear whether the strategies that have been identified are the cause or result of their success.

Correlational studies employing statistical procedures examined whether there are specific strategies that are statistically related to second language proficiency. Ellis (1994: 551) cites three studies of this type. One study elicited information about the behaviours learners reported using in study inside the classroom, individual study and social interaction outside the classroom. In another study the relationship between four strategies and second language proficiency was studied. In a third study three sets of strategies were identified, depending on whether the focus of the different behaviours was on form, on meaning and on memory. These three studies afford only limited information about the relationship between learning strategies and second language learning, and the results are rather indeterminate.

Next, Ellis (1994:553) refers to studies of *vocabulary-learning strategies*. A general distinction needs to be drawn between those strategies used to memorize isolated lexical items and those strategies used to learn new words from the context. A first study suggests that the use of mnemonic association aids vocabulary learning. The general conclusion for this study was that any attempt to form an association involving the target word aided retention. Another interesting finding was that there was an interaction between the learners' overall level of proficiency and the kind of task that worked best for vocabulary learning. Another study investigated the success of three vocabulary-learning strategies: keyword, semantic and keyword-semantic. The study of vocabulary-learning strategies is a promising area of enquiry because it is possible to define the learning targets and strategies very precisely, and also to investigate strategies that have wide currency in the literature. Learning strategies used by children have also been studied (Ellis, 1994:554). The strategies described in the first study are those employed successfully by children in the early stages of language learning. In the second study the researchers examined how childrens' learning strategies change as their knowledge of the second language develops. What is not clear in these studies is whether the differences in the kinds of strategies used by adult and child subjects are a reflection of their age or of the research methodology.

Caution must be exercised in drawing conclusions from the research that has investigated the relationship between learning strategies and second language development. Studies have varied enormously in the kind of learners studied, in the procedures to obtain information about strategy use, and in the ways in which learning 'success' has been assessed.

3.6 CONCLUSION

If students use language learning strategies they may become more proficient in the target language. Reading forms an integral part of communicative language learning and the next chapter will focus on it.

CHAPTER 4

READING STRATEGIES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Reading strategies are used by students to develop their comprehension of language. Garner (1987:116) says that

strategies that increase the likelihood of comprehension and retrieval of important content, given in the finite resources available, are essential.

Reading is one way in which students make contact with new information. However, they often fail to comprehend what they read. In order to promote reading comprehension, the teaching of reading strategies can be employed.

A definition of reading, reasons why the process of reading is difficult and the influence motivation has on students when they read, are explored in this chapter. Comprehension, schema theory, which includes top-down and bottom-up processes, and reading strategies are discussed. Students' awareness of reading strategies are explored. The four reading strategies selected for examination in this study, the reasons why they were chosen, and their purpose in reading, are also discussed.

4.2 READING

4.2.1 Definition of reading

A simple definition of reading is provided by Mitchell (1982:1), who defines it as the ability to make sense of printed symbols. According to Cross and Paris (1988:136-140) reading is a "*purposeful activity requiring the orchestration of a wide variety of cognitive skills to decode, comprehend and learn from text*". It starts early in life and is part of a communication sequence that begins with the emotional utterances of infants, and develops into a complex lexicon of spoken and written English (Robeck & Wallace,

1990:19). The process itself is described by Robeck and Wallace (1990:27) as a process of translating signs and symbols into meanings and incorporating new information into existing cognitive and affective structures.

Reading is important, because it is used to obtain new information, give and receive messages and orders, i.e., to communicate with each other. Most of the knowledge acquired in schools is gained through written prose. However, students read for different purposes. The purpose for reading determines the kind of reading that is performed. Students' purposes for reading provide the measure against which they can judge the relevance of the material. It can also be their guide in dealing with specific material (Farnes, 1973:10). Students become goal-directed when they know what they want to achieve when they read. They also become efficient readers to the extent that the strategies they use allow them to concentrate on what is relevant to their purpose for reading.

Reading should be an active process in which students interact with print through the use of past experiences and knowledge of the linguistic system.

Reading has the following characteristics. It:

- **is rapid** - students have to maintain the flow of information at a sufficient rate to make connections;
- **is purposeful** - a student should have a purpose for reading;
- **is interactive** - background knowledge as well as information from the printed page should be used;
- **is comprehending** - students expect to understand what they read; and
- **develops gradually** - effective reading doesn't come suddenly (Grabe, 1991: 377).

4.2.2 Reading proficiency of students

Students' reading proficiency affects their comprehension of language.

More proficient students recall more of the taught information than less proficient students, and use strategies appropriate to their own stage of development, personality, age, purpose of reading and type of context. Furthermore, they understand that reading is a sense-making process (Riley, 1992:42). They know when they don't comprehend and when their strategies should be adjusted. They seek further information and apply appropriate conceptual meaning to a passage. Not only do good readers remember more of what they read; they also remember the main points (Stevens, 1988:25). They know more about reading strategies, detect errors more often while reading, and have better recall of text information. Grabe (1991:381) states that "*good readers use knowledge they brought to the reading and then read by predicting information, sampling the text and confirming the prediction*". Good readers are better at identifying ideas important to the text. This results in students contributing more to a passage than the visual symbols on the page. Better readers thus have better strategy use.

Less proficient students use fewer strategies and use them less effectively in reading comprehension (Grabe, 1991:380). Poor readers often do not even exhibit regulatory processes such as reading strategies, nor do they realise that their comprehension of the text is flawed. When they are told about it, they do not do anything to resolve the problem (Stevens, 1988:24). Poor readers must be made more aware of processes used to comprehend and organize ideas presented in the text and to control these processes (Stevens, 1988:24). Slow readers exhibit lower comprehension because attention to letters and words inhibits readers' attention to conceptual and schematic information (Swaffar, 1988:139).

Oxford and Nyikos (1989:295) state that strategies help explain the performance of good students, and the use of inappropriate strategies explains the frequent failures of poor students.

Students need visual and non-visual information to be able to read. Reading always involves a combination of visual and non-visual information. The less non-visual information is available to the reader, the more visual information is required; the more non-visual information the text provides, the less visual information the reader needs. Reading is an interaction between reader and text. Owing to prior knowledge, some readers find it easy to read; they have minimal need for visual information. Reading does not involve the quality of visual information available in print, but the amount of non-visual information the reader can bring to bear on the text.

The insufficiency of non-visual information can make reading impossible, because there is a limit to how much visual information the student's brain can absorb at any one time. The printed line is obvious to the reader and completely illegible to the reader whose dependence on visual information can limit his perception to just two or three letters in the middle of the line (Smith, 1982:11-12).

Reading must be fast, selective and dependent on non-visual information. "*Fast*" means that there is a limit to the speed with which the brain can make sense of visual information. Readers must avoid paying too much attention to detail. The aim is to read as much text as possible while retaining meaningfulness (Smith, 1982:37).

Reading needs to be selective since the brain has no time to attend to all the information in the print. There is no memory available to cope with all the information available on the page.

Readers should attend to those parts of the text that contain the most important information. Reading depends on making the maximum use of what is already known. Some readers cannot make sense of what they are expected to read because the material bears no relevance to any prior knowledge they might have. Reading then becomes difficult and learning to read impossible (Smith, 1982:39).

In conclusion, it is clear that if students don't have sufficient background knowledge and know how the reading process works they cannot expect to be proficient readers. Another aspect that has an influence on students and their reading is motivation.

4.2.3 Motivation

Why do people go through all the trouble of learning to read if they could get the same information by any other means? If reading were impossible it would be more difficult to communicate with each other. Smith (1982:56) says that people read for two reasons. The first reason is to get something from the text, i.e., to read without a purpose. The second reason is to be involved in the text, i.e., to become engaged in reading and generate experience.

The extent to which students will actively involve themselves in learning a language is determined by attitude and motivation (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989:295). Highly motivated students use a variety of strategies which leads to more successful learning of a language.

Achievement motivates students to perform better and become more interested in their tasks. Motivated students are more creative, predict the outcome of a story and make statements. A student's attitude towards language learning has a considerable effect on his success in mastering a second language (Kennedy, 1970:3). Oller and Richards (1973:239) state that the second language achievement is facilitated by an integrative motive, and that the development of such a motive is dependent upon a particular attitudinal atmosphere in the context. They furthermore state that motivation must be fostered by an accepting attitude by parents.

Faerch et al. (1984:208) postulate that a positive attitude is synonymous with increased motivation and produces better results. Students will work harder and experience more positive outcomes. According to Robeck and Wallace (1990:137), reading makes it possible to resolve issues, solve problems and find new evidence. Furthermore, it gives people the feeling of power to have the ability to control word recognition. This feeling increases as individuals shift their motivation to reading for knowledge (Robeck & Wallace, 1990:52). This mastery of code breaking motivates readers to tackle other facets of the reading process.

4.3 COMPREHENSION

4.3.1 Definition of comprehension

The nature of comprehension should influence academic performance indirectly by controlling the effectiveness of one's reading efforts. Comprehension is the process during which students sample, predict, confirm and ultimately integrate text. Reading comprehension occurs when the total meaning of the passage is fitted into a network of information organized in ways meaningful to a society (Carrel & Eisterhold, 1982:82). Swaffar et al. (1991:22) define comprehension as the process during which students construct mental representation for incoming pieces of verbal information.

Comprehension standards will reflect a student's conception of the desired outcome of the reading process (Ryan, 1984:148). The level at which text information is processed will be related to a student's ability to comprehend and retain information (Ryan, 1984:249).

The problem which results is that reading comprehension is achieved only to a limited extent because students are ignorant about reading strategies. Should they be aware of

these strategies, they might be able to clearly understand the benefits to be derived from them. Comprehension may be achieved to a larger extent if students' awareness and use of strategies are extended.

A very important theory of reading comprehension is schema theory. This theory will now be reviewed.

4.3.2 Schema theory

According to researchers, knowledge is stored in schema structures, or schemata, which are organized representations of background experience (Pritchard, 1990:275). The role of background knowledge in comprehension has been formalized as schema theory. Students can understand text when they are able to find a configuration of hypotheses (schemata) which offers a coherent account of the various aspects of the text. If they cannot find a configuration, the text is disjointed and incomprehensible. Students who possess accurate schemata related to the material which they read, comprehend that material more effectively than students who lack such schemata. According to Freedle (1979:2), schema theory provides a structure powerful enough to support the interaction between different levels of processing in reading. The schema also provide an interpretive framework which students may utilize when they read.

Grabe (1991:384) defines schema theory as a theoretical metaphor for students' prior knowledge which is integrated in memory and useful in improving reading instruction. Hansen and Pearson (1983:821) define schema theory as the procedures that students hypothesize for explaining how new information is meshed with existing knowledge in the process of comprehending.

Swaffar (1988:124) and Mandl et al. (1984:309) stress the importance of schema theory. They say familiarity with the schemata will facilitate reading comprehension.

According to schema theory:

- Texts only provide directions for students as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own, previously acquired knowledge.
- Comprehending a text is an interactive process between students' background knowledge and text.

- The process of interpretation is guided by the principle that every input is mapped against some existing schema and that all aspects of that schema must be compatible with the input information. This principle results in two basic modes of information processing, called bottom-up and top-down processing (Carrel & Eisterhold, 1982:74).

However, schema theory also involves other important processes. Freedle (1979:5) states that the process of interpretation is guided by the principle that all data must be accounted for. Every input event must be mapped against some schema and all aspects of that schema must be compatible with the input information. The result is the two modes of information processing: bottom-up and top-down.

4.3.3 Bottom-up and top-down processing

New information is interpreted by using bottom-up and top-down processes.

The bottom-up process is used for incoming data that must be organized hierarchically, from the most general to the specific. The incoming information is propagated upward through increasingly comprehensive levels of interpretation (Freedle, 1979:5). The important factors working together in this process are the student, the text and the illustrative detail. This process also ensures that readers will be sensitive to information fitting their hypotheses about contents.

The top-down process is used for making general predictions and searches for information to fit these schemata (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1982:75). The important factors working together in this process are the student, his background and his perspective. By using this process, readers will be able to select between alternative possible interpretations of the incoming data. The top-down process can help improve a student's limited language proficiency.

These two processes must be used simultaneously. Swaffar (1988:123) states that reading comprehension results from interactive process that operate simultaneously rather than sequentially. However, if a mismatch between the prediction and information occurs, the reader must revise the interpretation so as to make the two compatible again (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1982:74). It is obvious that background knowledge or schemata interacts with conceptual abilities and process strategies to produce comprehension.

4.3.4 How are schemata used?

In the process of trying to understand a sentence, students try to relate the sentence to something familiar, some schema which will account for the event described in the passage. A number of related concepts come to the fore which are not literally mentioned in the text. Therefore, students are forced to revise their interpretations in such a way as to make the information compatible with the information in the text, to make the whole text cohere (Carrel & Eisterhold, 1982:74).

4.4 READING, LEARNING AND COMPREHENSION

The fact that reading is important in learning need not be argued. Comprehension depends on the context in which words are used; if it is specific detail, the act of reading itself depends on the situation in which it is accomplished and the intention of the reader (Smith, 1982:166). A student's awareness of the reading process, purpose and strategies are regarded as an integral component of reading. The reading process makes students responsible not only for generating meaning from text, but also monitoring their thinking to ensure accurate comprehension (Dewitz et al., 1987:118).

4.5 READING STRATEGIES

Reading strategies are those mental processes that readers consciously choose to use for accomplishing reading tasks. Cashdan (1979:66) sees reading strategies as the measure of a student's ability and willingness to reflect on whatever it is he is reading. Recent research has shown that reading strategies are not intrinsically good; their success depends on factors such as the person using them, the text and place in the text where they are employed, the particular circumstances under and purposes for which they are used (Cohen, 1990:80).

Cohen (1990:74) states that there is growing consensus that reading comprehension improves when there is greater conscious awareness of reading strategies. There are no easy formulas for selecting strategies because readers choose different strategies and use them at different frequencies. Students need to learn when and why various strategies should be used to accomplish different purposes (Paris et al., 1984:12-40). If students don't understand the value of or reasons for using strategies they will not adopt them. It

follows that students can become self-directed and independent readers if they adopt reading strategies.

Strategies vary according to the manipulation of different elements of the context. The factors that determine this are the readability and structure of the text, the student's knowledge of the context and his frame of reference. Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:65) state that these factors will promote reading comprehension. Thus, a reading strategy is an intentional action to develop an understanding of what is read.

4.6 STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF READING STRATEGIES

In Chapter 2 it was stated that researchers differ on whether reading strategies are used consciously or subconsciously (cf. 2.6.1). As pointed out in Chapter 1, Makay et al. (1979:144) state that teachers should mostly be concerned with helping students to understand the text and not with testing comprehension when presenting a comprehension lesson. Johnston (1984:7) says that the only way in which teachers can establish whether students comprehend a text is when they are able to establish logical connections between ideas in the text and express these in an alternative form. Teachers should therefore make students aware of reading strategies and teach them how to use them for better comprehension. Students must consciously make use of reading strategies.

Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:64) state that while some students appear to have become competent readers, their comprehension of the text remains poor. This not only makes their reading experience poorer, but, in the long term impose a threshold on their technical reading competence. Without teaching and helping the student to become aware of his knowledge of reading strategies and their use, the problem will remain and in time become more serious.

Teachers generally find it difficult to choose or identify the most suitable reading strategies to teach students. It is impossible to teach all the strategies or to satisfy every individual student's needs. This fact is illustrated by the finding that a group of ten high school students uses approximately 130 different reading strategies (Cohen, 1990:91).

4.7 FOUR IMPORTANT READING STRATEGIES

A number of reading strategies are frequently mentioned in the literature. These include: getting the idea quickly, using resources, analyzing expressions, placing new words in context, using imagery, using keywords, recombining, using linguistic clues, and getting help (cf. 3.3). In a specific reading situation it isn't necessarily the strategy that changes but the frequency with which a strategy is used. There is a tendency in readers to apply most strategies when they want to, are able to and need to comprehend.

For this study only four reading strategies, which are frequently mentioned in the literature, have been selected. They seem to be among the most prominent and widely used ones for reading comprehension. The four strategies are:

- guessing the meaning of the word from the context.
- identifying the main idea in a passage
- making inferences
- generalizing

4.7.1 Guessing the meaning of a word from the context

When students read passages it cannot be accepted that they know the meanings of all the words in the passages. They should learn that they are able to guess the meanings of the unfamiliar words by using the context and clues surrounding the words.

Students should be trained to employ guessing strategies rather than dictionaries when they encounter unfamiliar words. Smith (1975:86) states that the most common account of the process by which students comprehend the meaning of sentences is probably that they comprehend the meaning of the whole by combining the meaning of the parts, of the individual words.

Perfetti (1985:32) points out that reading comprehension depends on the reader's knowledge of word meanings and knowledge of domains related to the text contents as well as processes of inferring. Cashdan (1979:42) argues that teachers have too readily accepted that ability in word identification is synonymous with the ability to comprehend a text fully and develop the use of semantical syntactics. Smith (1975:89) says that once the status of the individual words is undermined, someone is bound to point out that sentences (or statements) really consist of words in isolation, and that the way in which

words are combined in sentences must determine both their meanings and the meaning of the whole. Weaver (1988:87) says that students "*can and do use [their] entire personal 'context' of knowledge and experience, [their] schemes to help [them] identify and sometimes misidentify words*". Weaver (1988:17) also stresses the importance of context:

We do not simply add together the meanings of the individual words in a sentence to get the meaning of the whole. This is because we cannot know what a word means until we see it in context.

Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:64-65) state that word knowledge is very important for progress in the process of comprehension. When students spend too much time trying to recognize words, the process of comprehension is impeded.

4.7.2 Identifying the main idea in a passage

Students are faced with large amounts of text of which cannot all be recalled. They have to be able to distinguish important ideas from less important ones. Their memories can then be used efficiently to retain the important information from the text (Baumann, 1984:94). The ability to comprehend the main idea is related to global measures of reading comprehension. If students are able to find the main idea in a passage, they will understand the meaning better. Harris and Edward (1975:476) state that "*one of the most valuable comprehension skills is the ability to find the main idea or central thought in what one reads*".

Smith (1975:10) says that finding the main idea is important because "*making sense of what is going on is something all school children must do*".

Finding the main idea in a passage is also an important strategy. Cashdan (1979:33) points out that pupils must be able to manipulate long passages to extract full meaning from it. The only way this can be done is to identify the main idea in a passage. Witte (1985:49) describes the process of "*main-idea-getting*" as a 'global study' if the reader is involved in studying long passages.

4.7.3 Making inferences

If students are able to form conclusions from a text, better comprehension is likely. Students have to make inferences to be able to come to specific conclusions. Inferences are critical acts of comprehension, since they allow students to make words and phrases meaningful, join together prepositions and sentences (Johnston, 1984:78), deploy arguments (Cashdan, 1979:43), and connect elementary events with other events (Freedle, 1979:23; McWhorter, 1992:378).

Inferencing is the filling in of the 'missing bits' of information (Johnston, 1984:7), going beyond the printed text and reading between the lines to obtain information (Cashdan, 1979:43; Burns & Roe, 1980:172; Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:154), or as Garner (1987:118) and Freedle (1979:23) describe it slot-filling.

Johnson (1984:7) states that the opinion on inference has shifted over the past few years from regarding it as a single process, almost an optional extra, to seeing it as a selection of fairly well-differentiated types of inference upon which virtually all comprehension is predicted. He regards inferencing as critical to comprehension.

In order for an idea in a text to be understood, inferencing has to take place by instantiating a schema in students' long-term memories (Hansen, 1981:821). Hansen (1981:822) says that the act of schema instantiation means that students carry a lot of excess baggage with them in the form of default assignments, and this is brought into focus for further processing. Because the information is not always stated in exact terms, students must extract it from details or ideas only suggested by the author (Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:151).

Garner (1987:118) calls inferencing text-connecting. Text-connecting is the semantic or logical relations that the student establishes between propositions expressed in the text and events discussed in the text. An inference is an idea that is implied in the material, rather than being directly stated. Wiener and Bazerman (1988:154) define inferring as the process whereby students use hints to gather information. However, inferences must be based on valid, available information and not simply on vague suspicions or wild guesses.

Johnston (1984:8) reports the following result of a research project on the process of inferencing:

when children were given clear information on a protagonist's goals, thus allowing more inferences to be made, they showed greater comprehension of the stories.

Until a unified mental model is constructed that accommodates the propositional contents of the discourse in a sensible way, the task of comprehension is not completed (Carr, 1985:97).

4.7.4 Generalizing

Wiener and Bazerman (1988:185) and Faerch et al. (1984:193) refer to the concept of generalizing as a way of helping students to interpret what they have read and to find the deeper meaning in the text in a broader, less specific sense, and to enable them to extend their existing interlanguage knowledge.

When students generalize, they extend meanings beyond the specific ideas about which they read. They add up facts and details and draw from that particular information, general ideas or principles (Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:187; McWhorter, 1992:385).

Robeck and Wallace (1990:116) define generalization as the individual experience of each student together with experience of society conveyed through its linguistic system. McWhorter (1992:385) points out that generalization occurs when students make statements about a large group or class of items based on observation or experience with a part of that group and class. However, McWhorter warns that students are not absolutely certain if those statements are true because generalizations are not facts; they only represent the author's judgement about a particular set of facts (McWhorter, 1992:386). The expertise of the author and the method by which he arrived at these generalizations influence how readily students will accept his generalizations. Therefore, McWhorter (1992:387) advises that students are to approach the author's conclusions with critical and questioning attitudes.

Oxford (1990:93) points out that associating newly heard information with prior knowledge is a powerful and very frequently used way to guess the meaning of a passage.

From these definitions it is clear that researchers agree that generalization takes place when students use their experience and knowledge to comprehend what they are reading.

4.8 CONCLUSION

Reading is a complex activity that is often not paid enough attention. Comprehension is important, because without understanding what one reads, learning is impossible. There is a wide variety of reading strategies that can be used to facilitate comprehension. Each student has an individual style of employing these strategies. If students are taught what these strategies are and how they can be used, their reading comprehension abilities are likely to improve.

CHAPTER 5

TEACHING AND LEARNING READING STRATEGIES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to improve students' reading comprehension, reading strategies have to be taught and used. In the literature there are general guidelines for the teaching of strategies. In the first part of this chapter the following factors influencing the teaching and learning of reading strategies are discussed:

- General guidelines for strategy training.
- Success rate of teaching strategies.
- Knowledge students need to use strategies effectively.
- Instruction and its importance for teaching.
- Teachers' planning of their lessons.
- Areas of concern in teaching and learning.
- Role of the teachers.
- Methodology for teaching.

In the second part of the chapter the teaching and learning of reading strategies, and more specifically the teaching and learning of the four strategies which are examined in this study, are discussed.

5.2 GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR STRATEGY TRAINING

Guidelines for strategy training inform teachers how to present knowledge so that the use of strategies can be encouraged. Pressley's (1986:149) point of view is that students need to be taught that there is a specific strategy for each task situation. According to Weinstein et al. (1988:315), good teaching includes teaching students what to learn, how to remember, how to think and how to motivate themselves.

The following are guidelines for the teaching of reading strategies:

- **Content analysis** - teachers select basic ideas on reading strategies to teach students, focusing on these ideas while teaching. Students should be **informed** about the ideas on reading strategies and the purpose of training should be stated explicitly. The value of the exercise should be brought to the student's attention (Searfoss & Raedence, 1985:257-258; Wenden, 1991:105).
- **Construct statement** - teachers assist students in finding suitable strategies and describe them to the students in understandable vocabulary. Assistance is required until students become proficient in employing strategies (Searfoss & Raedence, 1985:257-258; Wenden, 1991:105).
- **Assistance to be provided** - students must be assisted until they have the ability to control the use of a strategy (Searfoss & Raedence, 1985:257-258; Wenden, 1991:105).
- **Self-regulation** - while busy with the training, the teacher should explain to students how to regulate (monitor and evaluate) - the use of a specific strategy (Wenden, 1991:105).
- **Training in context** - problems must be directly identified and attended to (Wenden, 1991:105).

Students usually need the supervision of teachers until they are confident enough to use strategies by themselves. These guidelines may lead to the effective teaching and learning of strategy use.

5.3 SUCCESS RATE OF TEACHING STRATEGIES

Teachers often experience success immediately after they have taught a specific strategy. However, after a few days or a week or so, students no longer use the strategy, and forget when and how to use it. Pressley (1986:139) says:

teaching strategic procedure does not necessarily result in durable and general strategic use.

He adds that learning a strategy in context is often not enough guarantee that students will recognize situations where they could apply the strategy. Not recognizing when to apply a strategy is often the only reason for strategy failure.

Garner (1987:122) describes strategy failure as a serious problem. Strategic training research has been done on the relatively low durability of trained strategic behaviours. That is, a student improves his text-processing or other cognitive performance after instruction, but neither of the strategic behaviours for the improved performance is maintained for very long after instruction ends. It seems that this happens as soon as students are left to their own devices.

It seems, therefore, that teachers' expectations should be realistic, and that strategy training must be a continuous process.

5.4 KNOWLEDGE STUDENTS NEED FOR USING READING STRATEGIES FLUENTLY

Paris et al. (1984:301) state that students should have three kinds of knowledge, which are important for the fluent use of reading strategies:

- **Declarative knowledge** - includes information about the task characteristics and task goals. The students must know what a reading strategy is and why they have to learn it.
- **Procedural knowledge** - is necessary so that students can understand how to perform various actions, for example, how to study or make summaries. In other words, students must know how to use the strategy.
- **Conditional knowledge** - students must know why and when to engage procedures. They also have to know whether or not their actions are appropriate and why it is important to use a specific strategy. Students must know how to evaluate the effectiveness of the use of the strategy.

Weinstein et al. (1988:25) state that most students want to gain knowledge about strategies and their uses. Students also realize that they need practice with a variety of strategies before they can choose the ones that suit their needs best.

Weinstein et al. (1988:9) state that active cognitive involvement is crucial to meaningful learning. Students cannot remain passive and expect to reach their learning goals. Meaning and memory are built by actively engaging the material students are trying to learn and by using learning strategies to help guide this active engagement.

Weinstein et al. (1988:18) illustrate the need for teaching and learning strategies by referring to an old Talmudic proverb which says: if you feed a person a fish, you have fed him for a day, but if you teach him how to fish, you have fed him for a lifetime.

5.5 INSTRUCTION AS A METHOD OF TEACHING

In the problem statement (cf. Chapter 1) it was stated that teachers often hand out comprehension exercises, expecting students to know what to do. Paris et al. (1984:1248) state that

intermediate teachers rarely provide explicit instructions to [students] on how to use comprehension strategies while reading. [An analysis of instruction manuals revealed that they] provided virtually no instruction to [students] about how to read. Given the lack of information available to teachers and the small amount of time devoted to actual comprehension instruction, it hardly seems surprising that many [students] today do not develop effective strategies for comprehending what they read.

Direct instruction involves "*teachers presenting comprehension and metacomprehension strategies, and students practising the strategies with the teachers guiding them and giving the correct feedback*" (Stevens et al., 1991:8). It is necessary to instruct students on what to do, and to explain instructions by using examples when students do not understand. Students who received more informed strategy training are more aware of using comprehension strategies as well as the importance of using them (Stevens et al., 1991:12). Students can profit greatly from instruction that enhances the use of background knowledge, cognitive strategies and having knowledge of the schema theory. Baumann (1984:103) proves that the "*implementation of a direct instruction paradigm for teaching [reading strategies] is superior to basal reader instruction*". He adds that strategies can be taught effectively when instruction is direct and systematic.

Weinstein et al. (1988:25) state that instruction should help students develop and use knowledge to meet goals. They add that instruction can help students to check their understanding of the material.

For instruction to be successful:

- it must be thoroughly and carefully planned. Teachers must know what they want to accomplish and how they are going to do it.
- it should be concentrated. Teachers must know what they want to teach and what the students are supposed to learn.
- it should make use of carefully prepared materials.
- it must be active teaching.

5.5.1 Teachers' knowledge of themselves and their students

Instructional goals help students to learn in a meaningful way (Garner, 1987:120). To achieve this, teachers must have knowledge of themselves, their students, their duties, and the strategies to be used. Garner (1987:120) points out that teachers should know their own strengths and weaknesses. They must also be aware of their preference for certain teaching styles. The level of proficiency of the students in the course must also be clear to teachers. Teachers must know how to present the material and how they are going to evaluate the students' work. Teachers should be aware of their students' strengths and weaknesses as learners, and bear these in mind when developing and implementing instruction. Kern (1989:136) stresses the fact that individual differences among students must be taken into account when evaluating the effectiveness of instructional programmes and techniques.

5.5.2 Knowledge of task

Teachers should know how the reading comprehension course is organized, how materials will be used, and the format examinations will take. They should also be aware of students' knowledge of the course content and their understanding of the course structure, requirements, tasks and goals. If there are potential problems with students' prior knowledge, teachers should also be aware of them.

- spot areas of misunderstanding; and
- link remarks of one student to those of another.

It is suggested that teachers keep detailed notes of successful as well as unsuccessful lessons, analyzing why they worked or failed, and recommending future amendments.

Cashdan (1979:139) points out that questions should be a measure for establishing whether or not students have mastered a specific skill or reached a certain level of competence.

Planning is an important aspect in teaching and it must always be kept in mind. Richards (1990:20) points out that effective language teaching programmes are dependent on systematic data gathering, planning and development within a context that is shaped and influenced by learner, teacher, school and societal factors.

5.7 ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Teachers help students become expert learners and experts in various academic areas. The immediate goal of teachers who teach reading is to minimize reading difficulties and maximize reading comprehension. Hayes (1991:80) suggests that teachers should, before they decide on teaching a strategy, ask themselves why they think a specific strategy is important and why students should learn it. He says that if the strategy, when the students have mastered it, cannot help them to become skilful readers, it must be eliminated from instruction. He further states that students must be able to use strategies independently and intentionally. Baumann (1984:104) expresses the view that "*the absence of application and transfer tasks and response generating activities did not complete the transition from full-teacher responsibility for learning to full-student responsibility for learning for skill acquisition*".

Heilman et al. (1986:195) state that

it is a generally accepted fact that the teacher plays a major role in determining the effectiveness of a reading programme.

Weinstein et al. (1988:315) say that teachers have two goals; one concerning the products and the other the process of learning. The former requires students to know what to do in order to obtain the best results in learning. The latter involves the techniques and strategies students can use to accomplish learning.

Heilman et al. (1986:10-19) believe that the key to successful reading instruction is the teacher. They list guidelines to help teachers become more effective reading comprehension instructors. The guidelines are as follows:

- Students must understand the relationship between reading and language. Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:69) say that clear cognitive goals must be set for students. They help to establish a clear purpose of the reading task.
- The instruction of the teacher should lead students to understand that reading must result in meaning, since it is more than a mechanical process. Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:69) also encourage metacognitive discussions and the organizing of activities that review not just the outcome of reading, but also the process.
- During every teaching period, students should read, or be read to, something that grabs their imagination. If they are interested in the content, they will want to learn and hear more about it.
- Differentiation is important in teaching. Individual differences must be a primary consideration in reading instruction, even though it is not always easy or possible to give every student individual attention during every period. Identical experiences cannot be equally effective for all. Differentiation of both instruction and free choice reading will inevitably result in greater student differences. Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986:69) state that approaches to different types of reading must be clearly explained to students, and add that:
- Proper reading instruction depends on the ongoing diagnosis of each student's reading strengths, weaknesses and needs.
- Any given technique, practice or procedure is likely to work better and more effectively with one student than another.

- Reading instruction should be thought of as an organized, systematic growth-producing activity.

5.8 METHODOLOGY

Richards (1990:11) defines methodology as the kind of instruction that will be required to achieve the goals of the programme. Methodology is characterized by the activities, tasks and learning experiences selected by teachers in order to achieve learning. The five most important issues regarding methodology are:

5.8.1 The approach or philosophy underlying programmes

Teachers should understand the nature of the language and how proficiency in reading is achieved.

5.8.2 The teacher

The teacher can be a monitor, motivator, organizer and controller, provider of accurate modes, counsellor or evaluator.

5.8.3 The role of the learner

The learner should have a certain approach and attitude towards learning. Specific learning styles, activities and strategies are preferred by individual learners. What do the learner and teacher characterize as effective learning?

5.8.4 The kinds of learning activities, tasks and experiences that will be used in a specific programme

Learning may take the form of pair or group work, a free conversation, a dialogue or peer group teaching.

5.8.5 The role and design of instructional materials

Good instructional materials are important for defining an instructional objective; setting learning tasks or activities to attain objectives; informing learners of the tasks they have

to perform; providing guidance on performing and providing practice in performing a task; and giving feedback on performance of the task.

5.9 TEACHING THE FOUR READING STRATEGIES

5.9.1 Teaching students to guess the meaning of a word in context

Before teachers can start teaching students to use the context to guess the meaning of unknown words, it is important for them to know that a lack of vocabulary can usually be ascribed to various reasons. For example, Nanda (1989:114) states that there is a direct relation between familiarity with oral language and comprehension of printed matter. This is why students who do not have an adequate background in using oral language are at a loss to understand printed matter.

McKeown et al. (1983:10-12) state that "*instruction that increases vocabulary knowledge will increase comprehension*". But they also assert that for vocabulary instruction to affect reading comprehension, it should not be limited to establishing an accurate association between a word and its definition. Instruction (cf. section 5.5) needs to consider additional aspects of processing and frequent encounters with the words being taught.

It is important, according to Cashdan (1979:64), to realize that there is no need to pause at every word or at every phrase or even at the conclusion of every sentence in order to make a conscious transition from what is said to what is meant. Word identification is partly sustained by the continuous apprehension of meaning. Both the meaning of the previous sentences and words and their form help the reader to determine what comes next. Using context clues to learn a new word is very important (Mason & Au, 1990:185), because

words which are taught to students in a meaningful context are likely to be learned more readily than words taught apart from such context.

Mason and Au (1990:185) say that the context makes it easier for students to connect new words to their existing knowledge about the larger context. Carefully planned and instructed lessons can increase students' abilities to use naturally occurring context to learn the meaning of unknown words.

The following guidelines are suggested for teachers to teach students to use context clues to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words:

- Unfamiliar words should be built on vocabulary that has already been taught. Keep a list of words to add to existing vocabulary to help students to **relate new vocabulary** to their prior knowledge. Instil in students an **understanding of meanings of words**, their relation to other words, and appropriate contextual clues (Cooper, 1986:178-179; Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:5; Hayes, 1991:54).
- Vocabulary should be related to a **specific topic** of study. Students must learn to use the **context** and **clues** that surrounding sentences sometimes provide. **Linguistic clues** are the clues used when previously gained knowledge of the language can provide linguistic clues to the meaning of that which is read. Suffixes, prefixes and word order are useful clues to help students guess the answer. **Introductions, summaries, conclusions and titles** are important sources of clues to find meaning in the text structure (Oxford, 1990:93). The meanings of the unknown words will be more readily learnt when students are exposed to a series of life experiences and thus enlarge the experience background (Cooper, 1986:178-179; Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:5; Nanda, 1989:121; Oxford, 1990:90).
- Activities should be developed in correlation with listening, speaking, reading and writing (Cooper, 1986:178-179).
- Teachers should make vocabulary learning fun. Students learn better when they enjoy what they are learning. **Graphs, pictures and tables** can help students to get an idea of the meaning of the passage. A description of a character can give clues to understand the meaning of the rest of the paragraph. The reader expects a character to behave in a certain matter when he is in a certain situation. With the help of a picture, for instance, the reader can identify the situation and understand it better (Cooper, 1986:178-179; Oxford, 1990:90).
- **Word-part clues should be used** - two words together can form a new unfamiliar word. By looking at each word unit and its meaning, the meaning of the new word may be recognized. Special attention should be given to prefixes, suffixes and roots. Students must look for parts within the word of which the meaning is familiar (Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:5; Nanda, 1989:122).

- **Denotation and connotation should be used** - denotation is the literary meaning of the word; connotation refers to other kinds of meaning beyond the surface. Students should learn the difference between the meaning of the word and that which a word suggests or the feeling it conveys include **multiple exposures** to new words in contexts that require students to use new words in meaningful ways. Any instructional programme can make students conscious of the value of understanding the multiple meanings and uses of a word in many different situations (Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:5; Nanda, 1989:122; Hayes, 1991:55).
- **Shades of meaning should be taken into consideration** - small differences between the meanings of words help students to recognize different types of similar objects quickly and clearly. Students must learn the difference between words having almost similar meaning (Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:5).
- Students must **learn to use a dictionary** to find the meaning of the words easily (Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:5).
- **Beyond the language clues** are clues that are related to the language, but are aids to help students understand the paragraph. Forms of people addressing each other implying their social relationship with each other, nicknames or titles that are used, can also help students to figure this out. Oxford (1990:92) gives the following examples to illustrate this. Somebody addressing someone else with "*My little love*" implies a close relationship while the formal use of "*you*" implies distance between the two persons or respect they have for each other. Status is indicated by the use of titles such as "*Dr.*".
- **The author's structural and organizational use of words, phrases and numbers** indicate the importance or priority of people or objects in the passage. If a character is named first, the author would like students to know that their character or object is more important than the next one (Oxford, 1990:92).
- **Promote students' active involvement** in learning new words (Hayes, 1991:54-56).

5.9.2 Teaching students to find the main idea in a passage

Garner (1987:111) states that finding the main idea in a passage is an extremely useful strategy in academic settings. He states that if students cannot produce abbreviated versions of paragraphs, it is an indication that a remedy must be applied.

In the process of checking comprehension, Garner suggests that step-by-step assistance by teachers is necessary. He lists guidelines to help teachers teach students to find the main idea in a passage. These guidelines involve that students should:

- **make a collapse list** of that which they see in front of them. They must provide a collective noun for the whole list; for example, rugby, hockey and netball can be classified as winter sports.
- **use topic sentences.** Students must look for a topic sentence in the paragraph, or create one if no such sentence can be found.
- **get rid of unnecessary detail.** Repeated and trivial information must be left out (Garner, 1987:112).

According to Baumann (1984:105), teachers have four basic instructional responsibilities when teaching a main idea:

- Teachers should know **what the main idea is, be able to explain what it is,** and explain why is it important to learn it and know how to go about identifying it.
- Teachers should recognize that **testing will not substitute for direct instruction** in improving students' main idea skills.
- Teachers must **present understandable and usable definitions** of main ideas, together with good examples.
- Teachers should explain **what cues in the text signal the main idea, and model verbally** how it is identified.

The following activities can be used to help students use the strategy of finding the main idea of a passage:

- The student may look for the **important aspects** of the text by giving attention to the way in which the text is organized. This includes a rapid skimming of the text, taking note of the subtitles, figures, tables, pictures and other features in the book. In stating the key idea, one may have to shift words in the sentence around, summarize parts of the sentence and put some of the writer's words in one's own words. **Asking questions** can also help. Types of questions students can ask are:
 - What is the paragraph about?
 - What do the most words seem to point to?
 - Which words occur most frequently?
 - What do the frequently occurring words relate to?
 - What is the idea relating to most of the supporting ideas?
 - Is the main idea stated or implied?
 - Where is the main idea located?

(Nuttall, 1982:20; Roe et al., 1987:106-109; Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:81-84).

- Students can also refer to the end of the book to see if there is a **useful summary, discussion or conclusion** (Nuttall, 1982:20).
- Students' efforts should be directed towards getting a **sense of perspective**. They should also try to determine the meaning of the text, distinguish major content from trivia and sort key items from important information. **They should look for words or phrases** (e.g. first, last, most important fact, the most significant fact) **indicating the main idea** (Nuttall, 1982:20; Roe et al., 1987:106-109; Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:81-84).
- Sometimes students need to **reread** that which they have already read. They have to scan all the information and if they have time, they must read the passage over again. Ask what the person or object is doing or what is happening to him or it (Nuttall, 1982:20; Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:81-84).
- Establish what the sentence is about by **composing telegrams conveying crucial information**. This will teach students to focus on key words (Roe et al., 1987:106-109; Wiener & Bazerman, 1988:81-84).

One sentence can give a student a lot of information. It sometimes offers the key idea. The main idea can appear in different places in the paragraph. It may be in the beginning, the middle or at the end of a paragraph. It is even possible that the main idea appears in more than one sentence.

Wiener and Bazerman (1988:82) suggest that it is easier and quicker for students to identify and mark the important information the first time they read a passage. They can refer to specific passages later. If the facts are underlined, details can be found quickly. While students are busy reading, they can add special marks and comments in the margin. This may help them at a later stage to have a better understanding of the text.

Cashdan (1979:33) says that pupils should be taught and trained to use all the cues available to manipulate the language in order to extract the full meaning from it, and thus to find the main idea in a text.

The exact nature of finding the main idea in a passage and the teaching practices intended to help students grasp the main idea vary considerably (Rubin, 1993:212). A foolproof method of finding the main idea in a passage does not exist either. The following method, suggested by Rubin (1993:212), is widely used and has proved to be helpful.

Students should know that a paragraph is always written about someone or something (the topic). The author wants to tell the reader something about the topic. To find the main idea of a paragraph students have to determine the topic and also that which the author wants to tell about the topic that is special or unique. Once students have found these two things, they should have the main idea. This procedure is useful in finding the main idea in various types of paragraphs.

5.9.3 Teaching students to make inferences

It is more difficult for students to answer inferential than literal comprehension questions, but students must learn that they can use their own experiences and background knowledge to help them understand passages and answer questions based on these passages. The difficulty students have with inferential questions in reading may stem from a distinction between everyday life and life in the reading class. Students do not implement the same behaviour they use in other environments when trying to understand textual information. Hansen et al. (1983:400) says that students shouldn't be blamed for not being able to make inferences, but ascribes their inability to do so to a lack of prior

knowledge, which limits their ability to draw inferences in particular situations. Sometimes when students have the necessary background knowledge they do not spontaneously integrate the new information with the old. Teachers and students must discuss the importance of comparing their own experiences to those in a text in order to improve comprehension. Students must consciously be made aware of the clues in the text and of prior knowledge in order to make inferences (Dewitz et al., 1987:100). Teachers must instruct students to "*use their own lives*" to describe the aspect of making inferences (Garner, 1987:119). Inference strategies designed to improve reading comprehension must incorporate provisions for metacognitive awareness and control as an essential premise of learning.

Johnson (1984:9) points out that, since there are often many possible inferences, inferencing processes must be somewhat selective. It seems that we try to get a jump ahead of the text by inferring where it is leading us, building a mental model of what we think the text is about. Students' sense and experience help them to predict what the author is likely to say next. Nuttall (1982:117) states that the author makes assumptions which students are expected to share or at least understand in order to make sense of the text. Students may be able to establish these assumptions by the use of inferences. They must go beyond the printed text and deploy arguments for better comprehension (Cashdan, 1979:43). Students should realize that they can and must draw inferences between print and prior knowledge. The author presents facts in an argument from which he expects students to draw certain unstated conclusions. Garner (1987:118) describes this problem as students having more difficulty in answering inferential questions than they do in answering literal ones. They seem to understand and remember explicit and implicit relations between propositions not as well as they understand and remember explicit intra-propositional information. Students have all the evidence required but they are expected to take the final step themselves.

Burns and Roe (1980:172) state that interpretive reading can take place when students

- **infer the main ideas** of the passage where they are not directly stated;
- **infer cause-and-effect relationships** where they are not directly stated;
- **detect the mood** of the passage;
- **detect the author's purpose for writing;** and

- **draw conclusions.**

Because information is not always explicit, students should reflect on information and infer meaning from the text, using their background knowledge. A problem which sometimes occurs is that some students have limited background knowledge and are therefore unable to attend to relevant information.

A student is supposed to use his previous knowledge of form (the alphabet, words in context and rhetorical form) to identify visual clues and expectations about the conceptual structure (culture, subject matter and pragmatics) of the text, in order to perform a personal reconstruction of the meaning of the text. Students use cues in conjunction with world knowledge to construct from the explicit content of the discourse a mental model of its more complete intended meaning, much of which is left implicit. Students try to figure out things in the world around them by inferring likenesses and differences between new, puzzling situations and things they already understand.

Dewitz et al. (1987:102) provide an overview to help students understand the organization and interrelationships of the information to be learned. Students can use this structure to organize ideas and assimilate information more easily. A relationship between new information and students' previous knowledge is also established. A closed procedure is used to model the inferential process. The teachers model or demonstrate the strategy and then guide the students while they are using it. Information from previous texts are used and outcomes are predicted. Textual cues and background information assist in interpreting the text. This is an effective strategy for training students to infer information.

Nuttall (1982:89) states that if the student and the author share a similar background, students are likely to interpret the text with no conscious effort. However, there are still dangers of misunderstanding. A careless student may read into the text meanings that are not there, simply because his sense of having much in common with the author is so strong. Widely different backgrounds merely make the fact clear that students and readers sometimes forget that perfect understanding of one another is impossible. Even though people have a lot in common, they have different experiences which, in varying degrees, make their views different.

Inferences are made when the author's meaning is not stated directly but indirectly. For the teaching of this strategy, students should be alert and able to detect the clues that the

author gives. However, students should nevertheless be careful not to read more into a statement than was intended (Rubin, 1993:219).

Specific activities ought to help students to improve their use of a certain strategy. Activities suggested by Roe et al. (1987:86) and Devine (1989:136-139) may help students to improve making inferences:

- While students are reading some of the following **questions may arise**:
 - Is something going to happen?
 - What is going to make it happen?
 - Why will it happen?
 - What will the consequences be?
- The **answers** to these questions can be **determined from the text** or even **other sources**.
- The **information** from these answers must be **incorporated with the students' schemata**. Devine (1989:136) adds that teachers should help students to acquire the necessary schemata. Students cannot make inferences if they don't have background knowledge on the topic. If students lack the background knowledge to understand what they read, teachers need to provide it to them.
- Teachers can **model the process of inferencing** by thinking aloud as they are reasoning an answer.
- Teachers should **encourage students to use their own experiential background knowledge** to infer.
- Inferencing should be **explained and discussed** with students. Most of the older students can understand the concept of inferencing. They can learn to identify inferences and make their own.
- The **difference between inferencing, opinion and facts** should be clearly explained to students. A factual statement can be checked, an opinion is a personal feeling, and inferring is guessing.

- Teachers have to provide students with **opportunities to practise inferencing**. They must set up situations where students can make inferences under guidance.

Inferencing can be taught to students but it must always be kept in mind that individuals have different prior/background knowledge and it will definitely influence the inferencing process.

5.9.4 Teaching students to generalize

Students' successes with reading and comprehending depend on the cohesion of that which they are reading at the moment and that which they have already read, their familiarity with the topic, and the complexity of the material (Cohen, 1990:75). Background knowledge is therefore also important in the ability to generalize.

Oxford (1990:76) defines prior knowledge as the associations a student makes between new information and familiar concepts already in his memory. Using this knowledge strengthens comprehension and makes material easier to remember. Oxford (1990:60) remarks that associations can be simple or complex, mundane or strong while reading the passage. However, they must be meaningful to students. Therefore, any association must have meaning to the learner, even though it might not make a great deal of sense to someone else (Oxford, 1990:60).

Like Nuttall, Smith (1975:10) indicates that the particular items of knowledge students might possess, will vary largely from student to student. Smith (1975:10) also comments that if students make sense of what they are reading and if there is to be any chance of their learning something from the text, they must make sense "*by relating the situations [they find themselves] to prior knowledge*" (Smith, 1975:10).

All students are individuals, therefore their prior knowledge and application of knowledge will differ:

What makes the difference between good and poor learners at school may be less the sheer amount of knowledge they possess than the degree to which they have it integrated and available for use (Smith, 1975:11).

Students try to make sense of the world by relating all their experience to their particular view of the world; an activity they have been developing and testing since birth. This constitutes the prior knowledge on which they will depend if they are to make sense of instruction and instructors. It is the student's theory of the world that the educational process endeavours to build upon, modify and elaborate. A recent study indicates that associating newly heard information with prior knowledge is powerful and very frequently used to guess the meaning of a listening passage. All listeners make mental associations with prior knowledge (Oxford, 1990:93). The same undoubtedly holds true for reading.

When introducing new topics, it is useful to point out everyday knowledge that might be relevant (Weinstein et al., 1988:8). Teachers' use of different examples when presenting new information is important. Different examples will be useful for different students. By presenting a variety of examples the probability will increase that all students will make contact with experiential or background knowledge (Weinstein et al., 1988:8).

Students must be sufficiently flexible in their approach to the text to be willing to convert what is written to a form of language they understand and remember easily (Cashdan, 1979:33). Students remember and use memories to learn new information. The information gained through experience is put into an organizational framework and stored in memory. This information is actively involved in the process of comprehending information (Witte, 1985:40).

Language generalization should be applied across three subcategories, namely aspects of behaviour, persons, and setting. Students have to apply multiple examples of these three categories because a single example of behaviour, trainer, and setting, limits generalization (Warren & Rogers-Warren, 1985:256). Multiple examples prevent rote responding to a specific stimulus, whilst generalization ought to be facilitated to new untrained examples or behaviours.

One trainer results causes students to demonstrate a specific skill only for that specific trainer. The lack of generalizing is based on the fact that one trainer serves as an agent (Warren & Rogers-Warren, 1985:260). More than one setting prevents that students' language responses are limited to one specific setting and sees that generalization occurs across appropriate settings (Warren & Rogers-Warren, 1985:261).

Weinstein et al. (1988:7) state that teachers can help students to understand the importance of prior knowledge in learning. Cues can be used to help students recall prior

knowledge. Teachers must help students to identify the ways in which prior knowledge can be used to understand new concepts.

According to Weinstein et al. (1988:8), students tend to use prior knowledge firstly to create direct relations, i.e. relating prior knowledge to what they are trying to learn. Secondly, they use prior knowledge to create analogical relations. Analogies help students to relate familiar and new things that share the same key characteristics to each other.

Activities that might be helpful to students in improving their use of generalization are:

- A particular word may be **encountered in a variety of contexts**.
- Students **should be open-minded and display positive attitudes** to be able to use context clues effectively. It is important for them to develop an attitude of expectancy about what is being read.
- Teachers should **encourage students to read backward and forward** to where clues may be. By doing so they can refine word meanings.
- **Different types of contextual aids** can be used to understand word meaning. Students should be given extensive practice in using these aids (Roe et al, 1987:60-62).

5.10 CONCLUSION

Teachers must pay special attention to areas of concern in teaching reading comprehension and see to it that problems in those areas are addressed. Not all the guidelines are suitable for all teachers. However, teachers may select and apply the ones which they believe to be most effective. The activities can be chosen and implemented as every teacher wishes. Every teaching situation will acquire a specific activity for effective teaching and learning.

Schmeck (1985:167) summarises effective teaching by saying it places students in situations where they are encouraged to develop more complex conceptions of learning and practise the use of the approaches.

CHAPTER 6

METHOD OF RESEARCH

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to explain the research method followed in this study. The research was conducted to determine whether the teaching of four specific reading strategies (cf. Section 4.7) contributes to the improvement of reading comprehension. This chapter describes:

- the design of the study;
- the subjects;
- the variables involved;
- the instrumentation used;
- the data collection procedures; and
- the analysis of the data.

6.2 DESIGN

A quasi-experimental non-randomized pre-test and post-test control group design was used in this study.

6.3 SUBJECTS

The subjects in this study were 60 ($n = 60$) English Second Language students. They all took English as subject at Ordinary Grade (OG) level, and were Std. 7 students, ranging in age from 13 to 16 years, at an Afrikaans high school in Pretoria.

The subjects were in two intact classes taught by the teacher/researcher. One class was randomly assigned to the experimental group ($n = 30$) and the other to the control group ($n = 30$).

The average English mark of the experimental group was 54,6% and that of the control group 52%. The groups were therefore fairly homogeneous.

6.4 VARIABLES

The independent variables were the ability to make inferences, guess the meaning of words from the context, identify the main idea in the passage and generalizing (i.e. the four reading strategies).

The dependent variable was the students' reading comprehension ability as measured by reading comprehension tests.

6.5 INSTRUMENTATION

Two reading comprehension tests, which were used as the pre- and post-tests (cf. Appendix A), were adapted from exercises in Wiener and Bazerman's (1988) book **Reading skills handbook**. A pilot study indicated that the reading tests were effective in assessing the four reading strategies. Each test consisted of four sections. Section A tested the students' ability to guess the meaning of unknown words by using contextual clues. Section B tested students' ability to find the main ideas in passages. Section C tested the students' competence in using the inferencing strategy. The extent to which students could effectively make use of generalizing was tested in section D. Percentages were used in the calculations of the results.

6.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Data collection was conducted by the teacher/researcher. Students wrote the tests in class under the supervision of the researcher. Both groups wrote the pre-test and their ability to use the four strategies examined in this study was determined by this test.

The subjects in the experimental group then received strategy training. Students' attention was continuously drawn to the target strategies through various techniques as set out in the previous chapter. Students had to identify the strategies used, determine how and where to implement them, and practise them. Two lessons were developed for the

teaching of each strategy (cf. Appendices B, C, D and E). The first lesson on each strategy explained the strategy and its use. It also included an exercise for the students. The second lesson was an exercise which students finished on their own to practise the use of the strategy. The treatment period lasted for two weeks. The control group did not receive this training, but dealt with comprehension exercises in the usual way, by reading the passage; answering the questions; marking the answers and accepting the teacher's answers.

After the treatment period of two weeks, post-tests were completed by both groups. The results of the two groups were then compared.

Follow-up interviews were conducted individually with all the students in the experimental group just after the tests were written, to determine what they thought to be the reasons for their performances. The results of the interviews with the students in the experimental group indicated a variety of opinions on and reactions toward the use of the strategies in reading and comprehension questions.

6.7 ANALYSIS

The data were analysed by means of SAS statistical programs (SAS Institute Inc, 1988). A t-test was used to determine whether the means scores of the experimental and control groups differed reliably from each other.

A relationship can be regarded as statistically significant if the results are significant at the specified alpha (i.e., probability of chance occurrence). Alpha is established as a criterion, and results either meet the criterion or they do not. In behavioural research, alpha is frequently set at $p < 0,05$ or $p < 0,01$ (i.e., the odds that the findings are due to chance are either 5 in 100 or 1 in 100).

A relationship can be regarded as practically significant if the results are of practical value to the researcher, language practitioner or teacher. Cohen (1977) established various scales according to which a relationship or difference between means can be regarded as practically significant. Cohen's (1977:20-27) effect size d was also used to calculate the difference between the means within groups. Cohen uses the following scale for calculating d -values **within** groups:

Small effect	d	=	0,15
Medium effect	d	=	0,35
Large effect	d	=	0,60

Cohen's (1977:20-27) effect size d was used to calculate the difference between two means. Cohen uses the following scale for the d -values:

Small effect	d	=	0,2
Medium effect	d	=	0,5
Large effect	d	=	0,8

6.8 CONCLUSION

The statistical techniques used in this study were discussed briefly in order to facilitate logical explanation of the results in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to the presentation and discussion of the analysed data. The aim of this chapter is to attempt to answer the question posed in Chapter 1:

- Can the teaching of selected reading strategies help to improve the reading comprehension of secondary school students? (cf. Section 1.1)

7.2 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS WITHIN GROUPS

As mentioned earlier (cf. section 6.5), each section in the tests represents a reading strategy taught to the students:

- Section A - guessing the meanings of words by using the context (cf. Section 4.7.1).
- Section B - finding the main idea in a passage (cf. Section 4.7.2).
- Section C - making inferences (cf. Section 4.7.3).
- Section D - generalizing (cf. Section 4.7.4).

7.2.1 Results within the experimental group

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the experimental group. Within this group, the results indicate a statistically significant difference ($p < 0,05$) between the pre-test mean and the post-test mean of section A (guessing the meaning of words from context), as well as a statistically significant difference ($p < 0,01$) between the pre-test and post-test means of section B (finding the main idea). Cohen's (1977) effect size d also indicates that these two sections differed practically significantly ($d > 0,6$) (cf. Table 1). With regard to section C (making inferences) and D (generalizing), the difference between the pre-test and the post-test was neither statistically significant nor practically significant.

It would, therefore, seem as if there was only a marginal improvement in the subjects' use of reading strategies (two out of four) as measured by the reading comprehension tests.

TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE DATA OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

GROUP	SECTION	N	MEAN (\bar{X})	SD	p	d
Y1E	A	30	6,76	3,03	*	0,62 + + +
Y2E	A	30	9,06	3,70		
Y1E	B	30	1,46	2,01	**	1,29 + + +
Y2E	B	30	4,06	1,92		
Y1E	C	30	1,56	0,97		0,41
Y2E	C	30	2,20	1,58		
Y1E	D	30	2,86	1,25		0,08
Y2E	D	30	3,93	2,25		

Key:

Y1E = Pretest

Y2E = Post-test

SD = Standard deviation

N = Number of subjects

\bar{X} = Mean

Statistical significance		Practical significance	
*	p < 0,05	+	Small effect d = 0,15
**	p < 0,01	++	Medium effect d = 0,35
		+++	Large effect d = 0,60

7.2.2 Results within the control group

Within the control group, the results indicate that only the mean difference between the pre-test and post-test of section B (finding the main idea) was statistically significant ($p < 0,05$) as well as practically significant ($d > 0,6$) (cf. Table 2). Sections A, B and D did not reveal any significant differences.

TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE DATA OF CONTROL GROUP

GROUP	SECTION	N	MEAN (\bar{X})	SD	p	d
Y1E	A	30	5,10	2,44		0,29 +
Y2E	A	30	6,20	3,78		
Y1E	B	30	1,16	1,01	*	1,66 + + +
Y2E	B	30	2,26	1,56		
Y1E	C	30	1,00	2,00		0,00
Y2E	C	30	1,00	1,53		
Y1E	D	30	2,46	1,71		0,21
Y2E	D	30	2,93	2,21		

Key:	
Y1E	= Pretest
Y2E	= Post-test
SD	= Standard deviation
N	= Number of subjects
\bar{X}	= Mean

Statistical significance		Practical significance	
*	$p < 0,05$	+	Small effect $d = 0,15$
		++	Medium effect $d = 0,35$
		+++	Large effect $d = 0,60$

7.3 RESULTS BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS

A t-test was used to calculate whether the mean differences between the experimental group and the control group differed statistically significantly. The results indicate that the mean differences between the two groups on section A (guessing the meaning of words from context) ($p < 0,05$) and section B (finding the main idea) ($p < 0,01$) were statistically significant, but, in addition, only the difference on section B was practically significant ($d > 0,8$) (the difference is only practically significant if $d > 0,8$) (cf. Table 3).

TABLE 3: MEAN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GROUPS

CONTROL GROUP MEAN (\bar{X})	EXPERIMENTAL GROUP MEAN (\bar{X})	SECTION	SD	p	d
19,50	10,97	A	19,58	*	0,43 +
32,5	0	A	30,37	**	1,07 +++
5,32	12,94	B	26,62		0,29
1,39	-4,4	B	36,99		0,08

<p>Key:</p> <p>SD = Standard deviation</p> <p>\bar{X} = Mean</p>					
Statistical significance		Practical significance			
*	$p < 0,05$	+	Small effect	$d = 0,2$	
**	$p < 0,01$	++	Medium effect	$d = 0,5$	
		+++	Large effect	$d = 0,8$	

7.4 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Discussions of results in this section focuses on the aim of this study. The results of this study indicate that there was only a marginal improvement in reading comprehension after the teaching of the four reading strategies took place.

In the experimental group, students' use of the reading strategy 'guessing the meaning of a word by using the context' (B) was the only one to improve statistically as well as practically significantly. (Students in the control group also improved statistically significantly in their use of this strategy). The improvement in the strategy 'finding the main idea in a passage' (A) was only statistically significant.

The question that arises is: Why did students improve in their use of only two reading strategies?

The large effect size ($d = 1,07$) established for the use of Section B suggests that students find it easy to use this strategy, and that teachers can easily incorporate this strategy into their teaching. The interviews indicated that most students found this strategy easier than any of the others to remember, because most of the exercises in their traditional reading comprehension required them to identify main ideas, or the theme of the passage, or what the author was trying to say.

The fact that there was no practically significant improvement in strategy A may be ascribed to a number of reasons. One reason may be that students often skip new words when they come across them in a passage. Consequently, they may never learn the meaning of that specific word. However, the meaning of the word may become clear later on when it is explained in context. Another reason may be that the vocabulary used in the passage is too difficult for the students. In the end there are so many difficult or unknown words that the passage does not make sense to them, since there aren't any words to assist students in guessing the meaning of a word. During the interviews most of the students said they still did not understand the strategy and did not know how, where and when to implement it. One student said he in fact forgot how to use the strategy. It would therefore seem as if the teaching period was too short in order to enable students to grasp the essence of this strategy.

Lack of a detailed knowledge of how to use the strategy 'making inferences' appropriately is most likely the reason for the lack of improvement in the students' use of this strategy.

Without knowledge of a strategy to guide them, students seem reluctant to take 'chances'. Students would rather not answer, than make a mistake. During the interviews some students admitted that they didn't pay attention in class when the lesson on this strategy was presented. Consequently, they didn't know what the strategy was and where and how to use it. The interviews therefore indicated that factors such as short attention or concentration span and the short treatment period could have influenced the results.

Most of the students indicated that they didn't understand the strategy of 'generalizing' nor how and when to use it. They felt they needed a lot more instruction, practice and feedback before they would be able to use this strategy successfully.

The small effect sizes established for students' performances in sections A ($d = 0,43$), C ($d = 0,29$) and D ($d = 0,08$) seem to indicate that other factors may also play a role in the teaching and learning of reading strategies, or that a certain combination of strategies need to be considered (e.g., only cognitive or metacognitive strategies can be taught in combination with each other). Extraneous variables, such as students' concentration or motivation, may also have influenced their performance.

7.5 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Certain limitations of this study may have influenced the results. The results indicated that the treatment period was of crucial importance. It is clear that a treatment period of much longer than two weeks is required before significant results can be expected. A sustained period of intensive instruction and practice in reading strategies seems to be required. Teaching needs to be intensive and well-planned, and the lesson structure needs to be carefully considered. The small sample size in this study may also have influenced the results. A larger group of subjects may have yielded different results.

7.6 CONCLUSION

The results indicated that teaching the students the fairly familiar strategies of "*guessing the meaning of a word from the context*" and "*finding the main idea in a passage*" can help to improve their reading comprehension. If students know how, where and when to use strategies they can and do employ them effectively and successfully. Other strategies,

such as "*generalizing*" and "*making inferences*", need more teaching and practising before positive results can be expected. Students' attitudes towards reading comprehension remain important, as these may influence their performance.

The teaching of reading strategies has not received a great deal of attention in our secondary schools. Most of these strategies are therefore totally unfamiliar to students. They need to become aware that the effective use of strategies can help to make learning easier, quicker and more enjoyable.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter conclusions are drawn on the teaching of reading strategies to second language students in order to improve their reading comprehension. Implications for the teaching of reading are also discussed.

8.2 HYPOTHESIS

The results indicate that the hypothesis stated in chapter 1 can be accepted partially, as only two of the strategies, namely 'guessing the meaning of a word from context' and 'finding the main idea in a passage', contributed statistically and practically significantly to students' reading comprehension.

8.3 SOME CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING READING STRATEGIES

The findings of the study show that it is important to teach students reading strategies, as they can improve their reading comprehension significantly. The teaching of some strategies had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension. By teaching their students reading strategies, teachers are likely to contribute towards the development of students' comprehension competence.

The implications these results have for teaching are the following:

- The teaching of strategies must be incorporated into everyday lessons. The time devoted to the teaching of specific strategies should not be too short (the teaching period of two weeks in this study proved to be too short). Teachers must make sure all students understand the work and that they have enough time to practise using the strategies.

- Lessons must be interesting and motivating. Reading texts must be selected carefully, taking students' interests into account. Lessons must be planned very carefully, and activities such as games or role-plays can be used. Appropriate exercises for each strategy must be prepared.
- The various strategies required for the comprehension of a variety of texts must be included in the teaching programme. Teachers must remember that there are different types of reading strategies. Different reading purposes demand different reading strategies.
- Students must be able to recognize the source of their problems and look for a strategy to solve them. They must be taught to fix their own problems by using appropriate strategies. Garner (1987:124) says this requires continual monitoring of a student's strategic needs and constant adjustment of the strategic assistance provided.

8.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following research questions need further investigation:

- What other reading strategies can successfully be taught to students to improve their comprehension?
- How does a student's language proficiency influence his comprehension?
- To what extent can reading comprehension improve if students are taught reading strategies from an early age?
- Does the length of the teaching period make a difference on the success of teaching reading strategies?

8.5 CONCLUSION

Although the results of this study indicate that the teaching of certain reading strategies will lead to more effective reading comprehension, it is important to remember that the

conclusions are only tentative. The questions recommended for future research indicate that the present study has raised questions about the teaching of reading comprehension that need further investigation.

Paris et al. (1984:84) say that

[students] can be taught about the existence of reading strategies through informed, direct instruction in their regular classrooms. The increased knowledge and strategy use of [students] also reflect their increased awareness about reading.

It seems appropriate to conclude this study with a remark by Dewitz et al. (1987:123):

Comprehension [strategies] can be taught, transferred to unfamiliar text, and applied by students sometime after instruction ceases. The success of the training appears to have been the result of a well-modelled strategy that comes eventually under the control of the reader.

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READING COMPREHENSION PRE-TEST

STD. 7 OG

Name: Date:

TIME: 1 HOUR

TOTAL: 40

Read the passages or sentences very carefully then answer all the questions. Read the instructions carefully. Meaning can be derived from the context.

SECTION A

Explain the meaning of the underlined words.

1. A byline, that is, the line at the head of a newspaper or a magazine article that tells the author's name, is rarely given to an inexperienced reporter. [1]
2. Citadels, fortresses built on high ground to defend cities, were common in many parts of the Roman Empire. [1]
3. Even though Martha was not part of the fight, we know that her gossip helped to instigate trouble between Maria and Jane. [1]
4. Since she had spent hours practising with her compass it was easy for Sonja to orient herself before leading the campers back to the range station. [1]
5. One look at the surgeon's grim expression told us how badly the operation had gone. [1]
6. Ben Franklin, who hated to switch back and forth between the glasses he needed for reading and the glasses he needed for seeing at a distance, solved his problem by inventing bifocals. [1]
7. Brushing your teeth after every meal may not prevent cavities entirely, but it will inhibit the number of cavities you get. [1]
8. The mayor's aids cancelled a scheduled meeting with an active community group that supported the mayor's re-election. [1]
9. The class covers only the most important philosophical ideas of the nineteenth century, not the trivial ones. [1]

10. We all went to Mario and Jerry's new clothing store, to wish them well in their new enterprise. [1]
11. A few years ago there were billboards along every highway in America. Thanks to efforts by people who want to keep our countryside beautiful, billboards are no longer ubiquitous. Instead, they are widely scattered. [1]
12. Honesty is the most important attribute for a politician to possess. [1]
13. Don't try to pet my dog until he gets use to you. He has a tendency to bite strangers who try to pet him. [1]
14. Many fastfood restaurants operate by means of franchises. A franchise is permission to sell products that a manufacturer grants to a dealer. [1]
15. That insecticide defoliates most trees; unless you want leaves on the ground instead of the branches you'd better not use it to kill insects. [2]
16. Jason felt sick every time he had to play the violin in front of people. His mother took him to the doctor, who said that Jason's mental state was affecting him physically. His illness was psychosomatic. [1]
17. Concert-goers are asked to refrain from taking flash pictures, as the bright lights disturb the performers. [1]
18. We all comprised a little about what we wanted to do last night except Sandra, who remained obstinate and insisted that all she wanted to do was skate. [1]
19. The judges needed several minutes to asses the gymnast's performance. [1]

(20)

SECTION B

Read the passages and write down the main idea of every passage.

1. Easterners commonly complain that there is no "*weather*" at all in Southern California, that the days and the seasons slip by relentlessly, numbingly bland. That is quite misleading. In fact the climate is characterized by infrequent but violent extremes: two periods of torrential subtropical rains which continue for weeks and wash out the hills and send subdivisions sliding towards the sea; about twenty scattered days a year of the Santa Ana, which with its incendiary dryness, invariable means fire. At the first prediction of a Santa Ana, the Forest Service flies men and equipment from Northern California into the southern forest, and the Los Angeles fire department cancels its ordinary non-fire fighting routines. The Santa Ana caused Malibu to burn the way it did in 1956, and Belair in 1961, and Santa Barbara in 1964. In the winter of 1967 eleven men were killed fighting a Santa Ana that spread through the San Gabriel Mountains.

[2]

2. Thomas Wolfe's play Welcome to Our City, written fifty years ago and published a few years ago for the first time, deals with the modern American South and some of the strange, passionate, and greedy people who live there. Although most Americans get the bulk of their news from television, few programs are as thorough as newspapers.
- [2]
3. America owes its progress as an industrial nation in large part to its ability to produce tremendous quantities of steel. Railway rails and cars, automobiles, all sorts of machinery, and huge buildings are only a few of the things which are made of steel. For centuries, steel was known to have qualities of strength and toughness not found in iron. But steel was too expensive to be widely used. Impurities had to be removed from iron to make steel, and no cheap method of removing these impurities was known. Then, in the 1850's, an Englishman, Henry Bessemer, and an American, William Kelly, each discovered a startling fact. Working on the same problem separately they found that a blast of air directed in a blast of iron would remove its impurities. This new process of making steel was so cheap and easy that steel could be produced in large quantities and at low cost.
- [2]
4. The many operating controls appear complicated at first, but they soon become familiar. The switch for the rear-window defroster on the dashboard and the windshield wiper and washer control on the turnsignal lever are partially hidden by the steering wheel. The electronic radio is imposing but logical. The right outside mirror operates with a powered remote control; the remote control on the driver's side operates mechanically. Locking any of the doors or the trunk with the master key activates the anti-theft locking system locking all doors, the trunk and the fuel filler, and setting the alarm system.
- [2]
5. Loxahatchee, Fla. Alligators, once considered an endangered species, are proliferating so quickly that they are invading yards and canals and frightening the two-legged residents. It's believed there are twenty thousand alligators in the refuge near this Western Palm Beach County town, and perhaps one million in Florida. "*We are getting to where there's not really any place for the alligators to go*", said Lt. Dick Lawrence, the state Game and Freshwater Fish Commission's expert on alligators. He said alligators pose little threat to humans.

[2]

(10)

SECTION C

Read the following story and answer the questions.

An old lion, who was too weak to hunt or fight for its food, decided that he must get it by its wits. He lay down in a cave pretending to be ill. Whenever any animals came to visit him, he seized them and ate them. When many had died in this way, a fox happened along. He stood at some distance at the lion's den and enquired how the lion was feeling. "Bad," the lion answered, and asked the fox why he would not come inside the cave.

1. How does the fox know that the cave is a dangerous place? [1]
2. Why is the fox sure that the lion would not come out and eat him? [1]
3. What is a suitable moral for the story? [1]
4. How do you suppose the story ends? [1]

(4)

SECTION D

Read the following passage and then choose the correct answer. Write down only the correct number of the answer.

After a series of incidents where pit bulldogs had bitten or mauled people, Lynn, Mass., adopted an emergency ordinance in June. It forbids owners to walk pit bulls on the street, even on a leash, and ban the sale of the breed. Violators were subject to a \$500 fine, recently lowered to \$50. A dozen violators have been fined \$500 apiece, the city Solicitor's officer reports, but no one has yet paid. Five plaintiffs, including the American Dog Owners Association have sued to upset the law as unconstitutional. The case is tentatively set for trial next month in the Superior Court, says City Solicitor Nicholas G. Curuby, who adds that since the new law was adopted there have been three more cases of pit bulldogs biting people. Twenty eight communities in the country have laws restricting the breed in belief that it is vicious, the American Dog Owners Association, in Castleton, N.Y., reports. "We have fought it, and we are going to continue to fight it", says Gordon Carvell, the association's president. So far, he says, his group has had three laws against pit bulls invalidated in courts in Florida. Such laws are unfair, he says, because they are not directed against vicious dogs in general, but single out "a particular breed of dog". And indeed a recent case in Lynn appears to support the view that all pit bulldogs are vicious. Officers with a warrant entered the home of a man suspected of selling narcotics, and the suspect ordered his pit bulldog to attack the officers, according to Police Chief Richard Courtney. The dog refused, whereupon the owner bit an officer, the chief says.

1. The city councillors of Lynn, Massachusetts
 - a. think dogs are a public nuisance
 - b. are out to hurt dogs and dog owners

- c. have passed a law that most of the city's citizens oppose
- d. think pitt bulldogs pose a special danger to people [2]

2. In general, pit bulldogs
- a. have attacked and bitten people more than most other breeds of dogs
 - b. are all vicious and uncontrollable
 - c. are the most dangerous of any breed of dog
 - d. are owned by criminals
- [2]

3. Other communities' law makers
- a. think all vicious dogs, not just the pit bulls, should be banned
 - b. agree with the Lynn city councillors that pit bulldogs should be restricted
 - c. have given in to pressure from the American Dog Owners Association
 - d. have more favourable attitudes toward dogs than Lynn city Councillors.
- [2]

(6)

TOTAL: 40

READING COMPREHENSION POST-TEST

Std 7. OG

NAME: DATE:

TIME: 1 HOUR

TOTAL: 40

Read the passages or sentences very carefully then answer all the questions. Read the instructions very carefully. Meaning can be derived from the context.

SECTION A

Explain the meaning of the underlined words.

1. After many weeks of work scraping off old paint and varnish that had been applied through the years, we managed to renovate the old desk. [1]

2. The translator had difficulty finding a Russian word equivalent to the American word "cheeseburger". [1]
3. The book was difficult and often unclear, but the professor tried to illuminate its main points by discussing important passages in class. [1]
4. Carmen finds it difficult to face and deal with new situations. This lack of adaptability will not help her when she moves to Boston. [1]
5. Maria bought eleven pairs of shoes, squandering her entire pay cheque in one afternoon of shopping. [1]
6. "*Our hope is that there will be no reversion to earlier behaviour patterns*", the professor said. [1]
7. Accidents are often a consequence of carelessness. [1]
8. While battling the fire in the plastics factory, fire fighters wore oxygen masks to protect themselves from the noxious fumes. [1]
9. Luther was very sad when his grandfather died, but thanks to the inheritance his grandfather left him, he could afford to go to college. [1]
10. He slammed on his brakes in what seemed like enough time, but the slippery roads made the crash inevitable. [1]
11. It was clear that he did not care whether he stayed or whether they went home. Such indifference made them feel terrible. [1]
12. One of the advantages of gold is its malleability, which enables jewellers to hammer, bend and work the metal into almost any shape or design. [1]
13. A good supervisor can recognize instantly the adept workers from the unskilled ones. [1]
14. Dieting doesn't always produce sudden weight loss. Sometimes the changes are very gradual. [1]
15. Dr. Albert Einstein, like many absentminded people, was prone to forgetfulness. He neglected to put on his shoes and to comb his hair before he left his house. [1]
16. *Buzz, click, cuckoo, hum, hiss, and pop* are examples of a technique in writing called onomatopoeia, wherein words imitate the sounds they name. [1]
17. In early times, farmers bartered their goods for animals and supplies. [1]

(17)

SECTION B

Read the passages and write down the main idea of every passage.

1. The history of the discovery of the Neanderthals is a fascinating story in itself. In 1856, workers quarrying limestone in the Neander Valley near Dusseldorf, Germany, discovered numerous ancient bones in a cave. Most of the bones were discarded, but some found their way into the hands of a local schoolteacher, who realized that they came from a very

peculiar looking human being. The teacher brought the bones to the attention of a well-known professor of anatomy who probably lived in Europe even before the Celts and the Germans. [2]

2. When I was an adolescent I never had the best jobs; these included construction worker, which paid very well, built up muscles, and withal seemed very manly; or copy boy on a major metropolitan daily, which put one on the periphery of interesting events; or a lifeguard, which, along with giving one an opportunity to acquire that most ephemeral of the world's possessions, a nice tan, set one in a fine position to meet girls. But neither did I have the worst jobs: these included setting pins in a bowling alley, which in those days paid ten cents a line and gave one an opportunity for so many uninteresting and extremely painful injuries; and selling shoes, especially women's shoes, which could try the patient of a glacier and often paid no commission except 1 percent on polish and laces. [2]

3. Once beyond the age of two, Roadville boys and girls do not play together, but are sex segregated if there are playmates of the appropriate sex and age available. Friendships tender to develop between young mothers who have girls or boys of the right age to play together. Roadville divides its behaviours sharply into male and female, and this division begins for toddlers. Beyond rattles, stuffed animals, early ABC books, and books on basic objects, toys and games are sharply differentiated for boys and girls. Pre-school girls are given Raggedy Ann dolls; boys are given Raggedy Andy. Girls are given metal teaset; boys, plastic soldiers. Girls are given dollhouses and doll furniture; boys are given toy trucks, tractors, campers, and jeeps. Girls are given books about little girls, babies, and baby animals living in a human family-like setting; boys are given books about trucks, ballgames, and boys and their animals. [2]

4. There is a housing project standing now where the house in which we grew up once stood, and one of those stunted city trees is snarling where our doorway used to be. This is on the rehabilitated side of the avenue. The other side of the avenue for progress takes time has not been rehabilitated yet and it looks exactly as it looked in the days when we sat with our noses pressed against the windowpane, longing to be allowed to go "*across the street*". The grocery store which gave us credit is still there, and there can be no doubt that it is still giving credit. The people in the project certainly need it far more, indeed, than they ever needed the project. The last time I passed by, the Jewish proprietor was still standing among his shelves, looking sadder and heavier but scarcely any older. Farther down the block stands the shoe repair store in which our shoes were repaired until

reparation became impossible and in which, then, we bought all our "new" ones. The Negro proprietor is still in the window, head down, working at the leather.

[2]

SECTION C

Read the passage and answer the questions.

The impact of the American periodical press also has been technological and social. The large, mass-circulation magazines have influenced the smaller magazines, which in many instances seek to imitate their appearance and to emulate the high quality of their printing, lay out, and make-up. They also have influenced magazines around the world. Europe, for example, is given to publishing magazines resembling *Life and Look*, and almost no heavily industrialized country is without its imitator of *Time*. The social effect has to do with the discharge or failure to discharge its social responsibilities. These responsibilities the magazine press shares with all communications media, printed or electronic. They include the obligation, in a political democracy such as the USA, to provide the people with a fair presentation of facts, with honestly held opinions, and with truthful advertising. All but the subsidized periodicals hold or seem to hold to these goals within a certain framework: that of the business order, the private initiative, profitmaking system.

1. In your own words write the point that the writer makes about their impact of magazines and newspapers. [1]

Choose the correct answer. Only write down the correct answer next to the correct number.

2. We may infer about new magazines like *Life, Look and Time* that
- they are resented in European countries
 - they sell very well throughout the world
 - they are respected as models for foreign magazines
 - they do not discharge social responsibilities
 - their production costs are extremely high. [2]
3. The writer believes that magazines
- must make a profit at any cost

- b. should not compete with television for advertising
 - c. should be subsidized
 - d. should imitate European models
 - e. should not accept untruthful advertising [2]
4. We may infer about the author's knowledge of the subject that
- a. he knows very little about Asian or African periodicals
 - b. he knows a great deal about European and American magazines
 - c. he knows a great deal about European magazines but not much about American magazines.
 - d. he has worked as a magazine lay out editor
 - e. none of these. [2]
- (7)

SECTION D

Read the passage and answer the questions.

In adapting the principle of democratic government to the family we run into some obvious difficulties. The child does not elect his parents and he is not a responsible and functioning citizen in the society of his family. His father can not be guided by the popular will of an electorate or a governing body to whom he is responsible. He cannot be guided by the popular will of his children, either, unless he is prepared to loose his sanity and his life savings. If he is an earnest, democratic father, he may not go for family councils and such things, but this is likely to become a hoax in the name of democracy which any five-year-old can spot in a minute. We need to rescue the American father from the unreasonable and false situation into which we have put him in the name of democracy. We will have no tyrants either, for authority does not mean tyranny. And authority of the kind I speak does not require physical force or the exercise of power for the sake of power. It is a reasonable and just authority exercised confidently as the prerogative of a father, deriving its strength from the ties of love that bind a parent and child.

Choose the correct answer and write down only the correct answer next to the number.

1. The writer believes that fathers
- a. should not have any authority in the family
 - b. should set up family councils to act as authorities in
 - c. should base authority on physical force

- d. must be figures of authority in the family
 - e. none of the above [2]
2. The author probably feels that democracy
- a. is a failure
 - b. cannot be applied to all aspects of society
 - c. is not a concern of the fathers
 - d. is not preferred to tyranny
 - e. is an unfortunate expression of popular will. [2]
3. We may assume that the author believes that young children
- a. need strict parents
 - b. should have nothing to say about the governing of a family
 - c. can easily sense a situation of fraud in the family
 - d. should be able to elect their own parents
 - e. all of the above [2]

Make a cross(x) in the open spaces next to the statement with which the author probably would agree.

- 4. Authority does not depend on physical strength
 - 5. The ties of love do not allow the use of authority
 - 6. Only responsible, functioning citizens should have the rights of democracy. [3]
- (9)

TOTAL: 40

MEMO PRE-TEST

SECTION A

- 1. The line that tells the reporter's name.
- 2. Military strongholdings.
- 3. Bring about.
- 4. Get to know her position.

5. Dark, harsh.
6. Having two visions.
7. Make less.
8. Elected again.
9. Less important ones.
10. Undertaking / shop / store / business.
11. Everywhere.
12. Quality.
13. Manner / habit.
14. Sell a company's products in a certain area.
15. Kills insects. Take the leaves away.
16. Of the mind and the body.
17. Not to do it.
18. Stubborn.
19. Estimate the value. (20)

SECTION B

1. That there is no "weather" at all in Southern California.
2. America owes its progress as an industrial nation in large part to its ability to produce tremendous quantities of steel.
3. Many operating controls appear complicated at first, but they soon become familiar.
4. Alligators, once considered as endangered species, are proliferating so quickly that they are invading yards and canals and frightening the two-legged residents. (8)

SECTION C

1. Other animals were killed there.
He knew the lion lived there.
2. Other animals will see him when he gets out and they will realize he isn't ill.
He is too old and weak.
3. Don't be dishonest for your own benefit.
4. He will die or go hunting again. (6)

SECTION D

1. d
2. b
3. b

(6)

MEMO POST-TEST

SECTION A

1. Make it look new or better.
2. The same.
3. Emphasize / make clear / explain.
4. Adjustability / changeability.
5. Spending.
6. Not happen again.
7. Results.
8. Toxic / poisonous.
9. What he gets.
10. Can not be avoided.
11. Something that does not matter.
12. Pliability.
13. Expert.
14. Slowly progressing.
15. Likely to do it.
16. Copying of sounds.
17. Exchange.

(17)

SECTION B

1. The history of the discovery of the Neanderthals is a fascinating story.
2. When I was an adolescent I never had the best jobs; but neither did I have the worst jobs.

3. Once beyond the age of two boys and girls do not play together, but are sex segregated if there are playmates of the appropriate sex and age available.
4. This is on the rehabilitated side of the avenue. The other side of the avenue has not been rehabilitated yet. (8)

SECTION C

1. The smaller magazines were technologically and socially influenced.
2. b
3. d
4. b (8)

SECTION D

1. d
2. b
3. c
5. Don't agree
6. Don't agree
6. Agree. (7)

LESSON 1

Level: Std 7

Aim: The aim of the lesson is to teach pupils what the main idea of a paragraph is and how and where to find it.

Objective: At the end of the lesson the pupils must be able to find the main idea in a paragraph.

Aids: Text, black board, transparency, exercise.

Time: 30 minutes.

Procedure:

Introduction

Read the following paragraph to the pupils while they follow on the text:

So many people today are living among the city lights and smog that they rarely, if ever, have a clear night sky in which only the stars themselves provide the main illumination. Even the Moon must be excluded if we wish to see the fainter stars without interference. Under these conditions, a person has a good chance of noticing a white, cloudlike band stretching across the sky. It is most conspicuous during July and August, although parts of it are visible any time of the year. This band is known as the Milky Way because of its appearance, and it gives its name to our galaxy. The Milky Way band is a circle extending all around the sky. Galileo, in 1609, was the first person to look at this band with a telescope. He saw that it is composed of very large numbers of stars, most of them too faint to be seen separately.

Question: What is the main idea of the paragraph?

Answer: A very small number of people have seen a clear night sky in which only the stars themselves provide the main illumination.

Question: How did you get to the main idea?

Answer: Left out all the detail.

.Presentation

One sentence can give you a great deal of information, but it has only one main idea. The reader must find the main idea in order to understand the meaning clearly.

Question: How do you find the main idea in a paragraph?

Answer: Leave out all the detail and unimportant information.

Put transparency 1 on the overhead projector, but cover all the information.

Question: What do you think does the main idea usually tell us?

Answer: Reveal on transparency.

Question: How do you think can we find the main idea?

Answer: Reveal on transparency.

Put transparency 2 on the projector. Keep the paragraphs covered.

The main idea can be in different places in a paragraph. Read the following paragraph and tell me what the main idea is. Reveal paragraph 1 for the pupils to read.

Question: What is the main idea of this paragraph and where do you find it?

Answer: The view from the bridge was beautiful. Can you see that the main idea can be in the beginning of a paragraph.

Cover the main idea with the coloured transparency so that the main idea is very clear.

Question: Read paragraph 2, give the main idea and say where you find it.

Answer: Despite the fact that the number of television sets in the United States has virtually reached a saturation point, the amount of time spent watching television has declined since 1976. The main idea can also be in the middle of a paragraph.

Cover the main idea with the coloured transparency so that the main idea is very clear.

Question: Read paragraph 3, give the main idea and say where you find it.

Answer: Chicago is a fine, friendly city. The main idea can also be at the end of a paragraph. Cover the main idea with the coloured transparency so that the main idea is very clear.

Question: Read paragraph 4, give the main idea of the paragraph and say where you find it.
Answer: Dogs make friendly pets, but they can also be troublesome. The main idea can also be in more than one sentence. Cover the main idea with the coloured transparency so that the main idea is very clear.

Production

Hand out copies of exercise 1. The pupils have to read all the paragraphs and underline the main idea in every paragraph.

Answers:

- Paragraph 1 - His greatest satisfaction over the years has been to see experts who once derided him admit he was right.
- Paragraph 2 - She saw her reason for living about to be destroyed.
- Paragraph 3 - Trying to protect one child from another's successes, on the other hand, can damage both.
- Paragraph 4 - It permits more intimate conversation.
- Paragraph 5 - But more powerful than those fears was the vow he made when he was rescued to "always give a helping hand".
- Paragraph 6 - Heyerdahl fits triumphantly into both groups.

TRANSPARENCY 1: IDENTIFYING THE MAIN IDEA IN A PASSAGE

THE MAIN IDEA USUALLY TELLS:

- * WHO A PERSON IS
- * WHAT AN OBJECT IS
- * WHAT THE PERSON OR OBJECT IS DOING

HOW TO FIND THE MAIN IDEA IN A PASSAGE:

- * ASK WHO OR WHAT IS THE PARAGRAPH ABOUT
- * ASK WHAT THE PERSON OR OBJECT IS DOING
- * ASK WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE PERSON OR OBJECT
- * LEARN TO SEPARATE MINOR DETAILS FROM THE MAIN IDEA BY ASKING QUESTIONS SUCH AS

**WHEN, WHAT KIND,
WHERE AND WHY?**

TRANSPARENCY 2: FINDING THE MAIN IDEA IN A PASSAGE

As the sun went down, the scene from the bridge was beautiful. It had been a perfect day. Up and down either side of New York the bright blue water lay gently rippling, while to the south it merged into the great bay and disappeared toward the sea. The vast cities spread away on both sides. Beyond rolled the hilly country until it was lost in the mist of the sky. All up and down the harbour the shipping, piers, and buildings were still gaily decorated. On the housetops of both Brooklyn and New York were multitudes of people.

There are 74.5 million television sets in the United States. At least one set for 98 percent of all American homes. 48 percent of all U.S. homes have more than one set, and some families even have a set for every person in the house. Yet, despite the fact that the number of sets in the United States has virtually reached a saturation point, the amount of time spent watching television has declined steadily since 1976. Explanations vary from the increasingly poor quality of network shows to the rising popularity of home video equipment, but the fact remains that we are owning more sets but enjoying them less.

Although the buildings are tall, none of them blots out the sky. People rush about as in New York, but someone always stops to answer a question about directions. A person will listen when he or she is asked a question. Often a sudden smile will flash from the crowds of strangers pushing down State Street. It is a smile of welcome and of happiness at the same time. And the traffic; it is tough, noisy, active; but a person never feels as if he takes his life in his hands when he crosses the street. Of course, there is always the presence of the lake, the vast, shimmering lake that shines like an ocean of silver. Something about that lake each time it spreads around and turns on Lakeshore Drive says, "*Hello. It's good to see you again*". Chicago is a fine, friendly city.

Dogs make warm, friendly pets. But they can also be very troublesome. No one will deny the feeling of friendship when, after a long day's work, a wet pink tongue of greeting licks a master's hand at the door. And watching television or reading a book, a man or woman can reach down over the side of the couch and feel a warm furry patch of life, hear the quiet contenting breathing of a good friend. However, try to plan a trip without your faithful pet and your life is very difficult. Where will you leave him? Who will feed him? Further, leaving a cosy house in the midst of winter and facing a howling frozen wind so the dog may take his walk is no pleasure at all. I often wonder why people put up with such demands upon their time and energy.

EXERCISE 1: FINDING THE MAIN IDEA IN A PASSAGE

1. With several best sellers and countless television and movie versions of his explorations to his credit, Heyerdahl knows he is famous more for his exotic adventures than his scholarship. He realizes that the people who stream to the Kon-Tiki Museum in Oslo are more interested in his triumphs over wind and sea than in his ethnographical theories. But his greatest satisfaction over the years has been to see experts who once derided him admit that he was right.
2. Nathalie, critically injured, lay propped against the guardrail. Three years earlier in her native France, her mother and grandparents had died. Then, shortly after she arrived in the United States, her American father was transferred abroad and she was put in foster care. Within a year, she met Denny. Soon Eva was born. Although her relationship with Denny was ill-fated, the tousle-haired baby brought Nathalie undreamt of joy. Early everyday she carried Eva three-quarters of a kilometre to a day care centre, then walked a kilometre and a half more to work at a fast-food restaurant. For the first time in her life, she felt driven by a noble purpose: to raise her child. Now she saw her reason for living about to be destroyed.
3. Trying to protect one child from another's successes, on the other hand, can damage both. Mark is an outstanding student, but his younger brother Jason gets below-average marks. Their parents, worried that Mark's success will give Jason a "loser" self-image, are careful never to praise Mark. Many experts think that's a mistake. The successful child deserves and needs praise, they advise. A parent should encourage the less-gifted child to find gratification in other areas.
4. But these days I frequently walk with only one child at a time, which permits more intimate conversation. My daughter, Heather, aged 16, has always been reluctant to communicate her innermost feelings, but on night walks she tells me about the fight she had with her best friend, her thoughts about sex and birth control for teenagers, her tribulations and triumphs in English composition. My 13-year-old son, Ethan, has always been a chatterbox, so when it's his turn he loves the opportunity to have me to himself. He explains how the gears work on his new bicycle, offers his analysis of why standard fives give parties and standard sixes don't (the latter have learnt that hosting is hard work and guests are harsh critics) and describes the design of his dream

house. I will listen to anything with the exception of blow-by-blow film reruns. Brief reviews, yes; endless plots; no.

5. But more powerful than those fears was the vow he made when he was rescued to "always give a helping hand". Indeed, since moving to Virginia and starting an equipment-rental business, Danny had fought two fires single-handedly, one saving a neighbour's home and another time saving a woman from serious burns. Yet nothing had prepared him for the horrifying predicament he now faced.

6. Heyerdahl has been showered with medals, honorary memberships and degrees, and The Explorers Club in New York, where he was shown the door so unceremoniously 41 years ago, is now proud to number him among its honorary directors. "Explorers come in two models," says John Bruno, the club's current president, "those who are in it for the adventure, and the academics, who are interested in adding to the sum of human knowledge. Heyerdahl fits triumphantly into both groups."

LESSON 2

- Level:** Std. 7
- Aim:** The aim of this lesson is to implement the identifying of the main idea in a paragraphs.
- Objective:** The pupils must identify the main idea of paragraphs in reading passages.
- Aids:** An article on 'Diamond Bonanza at Smoke Creek'.
- Time:** 30 minutes
- Presentation:** Review the places in a paragraph where the main idea can be found. Use transparency 2 from lesson 1.
- Practice:** Hand out a copy of the article to every pupil. They read it and underline the main idea in paragraphs 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 12.

Identifying the main idea in a paragraph:

EXERCISE 2

Diamond bonanza at Smoke Creek Reader's Digest October 1984

1. It was July 1979. The helicopter bucketed along twisting riverbeds, its occupants scanning the terrain in search for clues hinting at the presence of diamonds. After each bumping landing, the members of geologist Maureen Muggeridge's prospecting team jumped from the helicopter and scrambles across mud banks and boulders carrying shovels, sieves and sample bags. They would haul 20 kilograms or so of gravel and sand back to the helicopter, and then quickly climb aboard and resume the search. The helicopter cost R 375 an hour. There was no time for admiring the scenery some of the grandest in the world.

2. This was the Kimberley region of Western Australia's tropic north, almost twice the area of the British Isle, but with a population of only 18 000. It is a country of wide, wooded plants and carved red mountains, so remote that large tracts have been examined only from the air.
3. Now it was the dry season, and from the prospector's helicopter Smoke Creek looked just like another waterless gully, fringed by eucalyptus and silvery baobabs. Maureen knew this would be her last attempt to search for diamonds before she had to give up her job. She was six month pregnant, and her employers thought it was time for her to take her maternity leave.
4. A tall, energetic English woman, Maureen worked for CRA as a bush geologist a hairy-chested profession into which women have not long been admitted. Her Canadian prospect husband, John Towie, was with her on the expedition to the Kimberleys. He worked for Northern Mining Corporation, a small Melbourne company run by his father, Rees. He was on secondment to the CRA administered Ashton Joint Venture, in which Northern Mining was partner, for this diamond hunt.
5. But the joint venture did not give their project high priority. During the early 1970s, the De Beers group, which dominates the diamond industry, had combed this area and found nothing. Rees Towie says a De Beers executive told him he would eat all the diamonds anybody found in the Australian Kimberley region.
6. Diamonds occur in an igneous rock called kimberlite, which having formed in molten depths, reaches the earth's surface only in slender volcanic "pipes" that are extremely difficult to spot. Even when a pipe is found, the odds are 50-to-1 against it holding diamonds.
7. As kimberlite decomposes, however, mineral grains are carried off by water. If gravel in a creek bed is rich in certain "indicators" pyrope garnet, picroilmenite, chrome diopside then somewhere the creek has traversed kimberlite. With such a creek as a "fix", the search for a diamond bearing pipe is marginally easier. In Western Australia's dry season, thousands of kilometres of stream bed are laid bare to prospectors seeking samples.
8. The Smoke Creek sample bags reached a Perth laboratory in mid-August. At the end of that month Maureen and John sat gloomily in CRA's office in northwest Kimberley. Maureen was about to return to Perth to prepare for the birth of her baby. Apparently they

had found nothing. Then a telex came in: there were diamonds in the Smoke Creek gravel!

9. Over the next few weeks other teams followed the trail of diamonds from Maureen's sampling area for about 15 kilometres to the headwaters of the creek. diamonds were there in staggering quantity.
10. At the time, world diamond production was about 50 million carats a year. Some 28 million came from Africa, 11 million from Russia, and the remainder from Brazil, Venezuela, Guyana, India and Indonesia. Smoke Creek is now thought capable of producing 25 million carats a year for at least 20 years. *"It's virtually impossible to think of any other major commodity where the supply has been changed by 40 per cent in a single blow"*, says John Macleod, CRA's chief economist.
11. But for De Beers, the Smoke Creek find was a further threat in a recession hit market. Cecil Rhodes had created De Beers by buying up and combining the diamond claims of Kimberley in South Africa in the late nineteenth century. The Oppenheimer family, which now controls De Beers, has ably defended and developed the Rhodes philosophy. In 1934 Sir Ernest Oppenheimer set up the Central Selling Organization (CSO), which now controls some 85 per cent of the world market for diamonds.
12. De Beers feared that the ability of the CSO to maintain diamond prices would be strained when they heard the first rumours about the new find. Moreover, Australian politicians and journalists began to ask whether their national interests might be better served by small Australian firms developing the new diamond field rather than the international mining companies that were natural allies of De Beers and represented by CSO.
13. The right to mine Smoke Creek was fought both in the field with one rival company actually staking out an area within the CRA claim and in the courts. But the CRA led joint venture had a friend in Sir Charles Court, then Western Australia's premier. In November 1981, just six weeks after rights have been issued for a Supreme Court hearing to decide a rival claim to Smoke Creek, Sir Charles' overment introduced legislation to establish the validity of all the joint venture's claims.
14. In January 1981, Rees protested vehemently when CRA proposed that all the Western Australian diamonds be sold through De Beers. He was resigned to the idea that Northern Mining would sooner or later be taken over, but he was determined to sell its independence dearly.

15. As the row grew, it became clear that De Beers would have to make some unusual concessions. In February 1982, De Beers chairman Harry Oppenheimer acknowledged that the agreement with the consortium would "*take a different form from those negotiated with other people*". As it turned out, the arrangement reached was that De Beers would take almost all the consortium's share of gemquality stones (five to ten per cent of the mine's potential) and three quarters of the "*cheap gems*" (30 - 40 per cent) and industrial diamonds. The rest would be available for direct marketing outside the system De Beers brought into existence. The deal should be reviewed in 1990, by which time Australians should know considerably more about diamonds.

16. Rees Towie steered Northern Mining into the hands of the Bond group, a Western Australia corporate conglomerate, which announced it would sell its five per cent share of the diamonds independently through an Antwerp dealer. The diamond war has thus reached a kind of truce.

17. When Maureen Muggerridge had her baby in October 1979, CRA rang to ask the child's name. "*Nicholas*", she said. So the mining camp at Smoke Creek was called Camp Nicholas.

LESSON 1

Level: Std. 7

Aim: The aim of the lesson is to explain making inferences to the pupils and how they can use it in reading comprehension.

Objective: At the end of the lesson the pupils must be able to make inferences to comprehend better.

Aids: Transparency.

Time: 30 minutes

Procedure:

Introduction

Inference is the process in which readers use hints to gather information. When you make inferences you read between the lines. You develop ideas from the exact information in front of you. Not every bit of information is clearly stated, only the hints or suggestion appear. You have to use your own knowledge and experience to understand it fully. The information is not always stated in exact terms and you have to apply your own information. You are not always sure that what you supply is always right, but if you follow the hints that are based on evidence you can be sure that the inference is fairly correct.

Presentation

Your English teacher is always very friendly and kind on a Monday morning. She greets the class and asks them how their weekend was. But one Monday morning she doesn't greet you as friendly as always. She keeps herself busy at her table, instead of discussing the weekend. She opens the cupboard forcefully and slams it behind her.

Question: What do you infer?

Answer: She is angry about something.

Question: How do you know that?

Answer: From what you see and know about her usual behaviour. Her appearance, actions and behaviour tell you that she is irritated about something.

Question: Why do you think she acted like this?

Answer: She is angry at her husband or children.

Be careful, you cannot go too far beyond information at hand, you cannot definitely say why she is angry. Your inferences must be based on valid, available information and not wild guesses.

Hand out and discuss the summary on **Making inferences** to the pupils.

Practice

Put transparency 1 on projector. Read the comic strip to the pupils. Reveal the questions. In pairs they have to read and discuss the answers, using inferencing.

Answers

1. b
2. b
3. d
4. a
5. d.

SUMMARY - MAKING INFERENCES

- ▶ *MAKING INFERENCES MEANS YOU READ BETWEEN THE LINES*

- ▶ *YOU USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION TOGETHER WITH HINTS FROM THE PASSAGE TO UNDERSTAND BETTER*

- ▶ *YOU HAVE TO BASE YOUR INFERENCES ON EVIDENCE AND AVAILABLE INFORMATION*

- ▶ *YOU CAN NOT GO TOO FAR BEYOND THE INFORMATION AT HAND*

- ▶ *DO NOT TAKE WILD GUESSES*

TRANSPARENCY 1: MAKING INFERENCES



From the child's question we can infer that

- a. the man's eyes were also open during prayers.
- b. she has an excellent vocabulary for a child her age.
- c. she can not hear what the man is saying.
- d. all of the above.

The humour in the cartoon is based on the fact that the child's question

- a. is silly.
- b. can be overheard by everyone surrounding her in church.
- c. is rude and disrespectful.
- d. severs to criticize the man for doing the same thing that he thinks the child is wrong for doing.

The setting of the cartoon is probably

- a. a movie theatre.
- b. a church.
- c. a political rally.
- d. a classroom.

We may infer that the man who is speaking believes that

- a. children are annoying.
- b. it's not right to keep your eyes open when you pray.
- c. the preacher's sermon was quite stimulating.
- d. nobody should close his or her eyes during prayers.

The man is screening his mouth with his hand probably because he

- a. wants everybody to hear him.
- b. is afraid he might cough.
- c. wants the preacher to see him criticizing the child.
- d. doesn't want anyone but the child to hear him.

MAKING INFERENCES**LESSON 2**

Level: Std.7

Aim: The pupils must be able to make inferences to comprehend better.

Objective: At the end of the lesson the pupils must be able to making inferences and use it while doing a reading comprehension.

Aids: Exercises

Time: 30 minutes

Procedure:

Presentation

Review making inferences with the pupils.

Question: What is making inferences?

Answer: You read between the lines. You develop ideas from the information in front of you.

Practice

Hand out exercise 1 on making inferences to the pupils. They have to read the passage and answer the questions by making inferences. Discuss the answer at the end of the period.

Answers**Exercise 1**

1. Workers are not treated well
2. b
3. a
4. a

MAKING INFERENCES

EXERCISE 1

Read the following selection, in which a former migrant worker describes the treatment he received. As you read, try to use inference skills. Then answer the questions after the selection.

I began to see how everything was so wrong. When growers can have an intricate watering system to irrigate their crops but they can't have running water inside the houses of the workers. Veterinarians tend to the needs of the domestic animals but they can't have medical care for the workers. They can have land subsidies for the growers but they can't have adequate unemployment compensation for the workers. They treat him like a farm implement. In fact, they treat their implements better and their domestic animals better. They have heat and insulated barns for the animals but the workers live in beat-up shacks with no heat at all.

1. Write in your own words the main idea of this selection.
2. We may infer that the author believes that
 - a. migrant workers should stop complaining and get back to work.
 - b. farm owners are mistreating workers.
 - c. veterinarians are better than medical doctors.
 - d. workers should be treated like farm tools.
 - e. growers are unable to figure out how to supply migrant workers with running water.
3. The attitude of farm owners toward migrant workers is one of
 - a. neglect.
 - b. fairness.
 - c. hostility.
 - d. favouritism.
4. What inferences can we draw from the passage about what motivates the farm owners?
 - a. Workers can be replaced easily at no cost to owners.
 - b. Farm owners are cruel people who like to make others suffer.
 - c. The government causes farm owners to mistreat their help by paying them money to do so.
 - d. Farm owners can't distinguish between humans and animals.

LESSON 1

Level: Std. 7

Aim: The aim of this lesson is to explain generalizing to the pupils and how to use it in reading comprehension.

Objective: At the end of the lesson generalizing must be clear to the pupils and they must be able to apply it to reading comprehension to understand better.

Aids: Transparency, exercise.

Time: 30 minutes

Procedure:

Introduction

Generalizing allows you to apply information you've learned in a broader, less specific sense. You can extend meanings beyond specific ideas you read about. The facts and details from the information you read can be drawn to general ideas.

Example: A child takes great pleasure in becoming able to read some words. But the excitement fades when the texts the child must read force him to reread the same words endlessly.

Question: Why do children become bored?

Answer: They have to read the same word again and again.

Question: What is so boring about that?

Answer: No more fun in it, don't learn anything any more.

Question: How do you know that?

Answer: It always happens. A child is interested in a new thing for a while, but as soon as he gets to know it well it doesn't interest him any more. It happened to all of the pupils.

It doesn't stand in the text but you know it because you heard or experienced it in the past. Now you can use it to answer these questions that is generalizing.

Presentation

Show paragraph 1 on the transparency to the pupils. Read it aloud with them. Reveal question 1 with the answers they can choose from. Read the question to them and ask them what they think is the answer.

Answer: c

Question: Why did you choose c?

Answer: It can not be a, because the data they have is facts.

Neither b, because computer resources help a person to use a computer.

Neither d, because a scientific problem is a problem which occur in the science.

The pupils used information which they had and knew about computers to work out what all the answers mean, to be able to get to the right answer.

Reveal Question 2 and 3 to them. In pairs they have to discuss what all the possibilities mean and work out the right answer.

Answer: Question 2: a

Question 3: b

TRANSPARENCY 1: GENERALIZING

Many problems of interest to scientists involve converting data into useful information by solving mathematical equations. The first computers were used in solving scientific problems because of their capacity to do arithmetic at great speeds. For example, one of the first problems computers solved, in the late 1940's, was where a shell shot from a cannon would land if it were fired with a certain force and in a certain direction, given a certain wind velocity, and so on. What were the data? The data here might include the design and weight of each shell, the amount of power used to propel it, and the design of the bore of the cannon. We could use a manual or mechanical system to solve the equations that needed solving but the work would take so long that the shell would long since have reached its target.

1. In general, mathematical equations help use turn data into
 - a. facts
 - b. computer resources
 - c. practical knowledge
 - d. scientific problems.

2. Complex mathematical equations like those that can tell where a shell shot from a cannon might land
 - a. can be solved by humans
 - b. require computers to provide solutions
 - c. are no longer of any use in current warfare
 - d. none of the above.

3. In general, according to this passage you would turn to a computer to help solve a complex problem, because the computer is
 - a. smarter than human being
 - b. quick
 - c. relatively inexpensive
 - d. important in determining the data needed to solve problems.

GENERALIZING**LESSON 2**

Level: Std. 7

Aim: The aim of this lesson is that pupils must use generalizing to answer the questions.

Objective: The pupils must be able to use generalizing to answer questions in reading comprehensions.

Aids: Exercises

Time: 30 minutes

Procedure:

Presentation

Question: What is generalizing?

Answer: To apply information you've learned in a broader, less specific sense to what you read. The facts and details from the information you read can be drawn to general ideas.

Practice:

Hand out exercise 1 to every student. Divide the class in groups of 4 and let them help each other to get the answers. They have to explain and motivate why they chose specific answers.

GENERALIZING

EXERCISE 1

Read the following passage in which John Steinbeck addresses the lack of concern most people have for the environment. When you finish, examine the statements. Put a checkmark next to the statements that, on the basis of the passage, are correct generalizations.

I have often wondered at the savagery and thoughtlessness with which our early settlers approached this rich continent. They came at it as though it were an enemy, which of course it was. They burned the forests and changed the rainfall; they swept the buffalo from the plains, blasted the streams, set fire to the grass, and ran a reckless scythe through the virgin and noble timber. Perhaps they felt like it was limitless and could never be exhausted and that man could move on to new wonders endlessly. Certainly there are many examples to the contrary, but to a large extent the early people pillaged the country as though they hated it, as though they held it temporarily and might be driven off at any time.

This tendency towards irresponsibility persists in very many of us today; our rivers are poisoned by reckless dumping of sewage and toxic industrial waters, the air of our cities is filthy and dangerous to breath from the belching of uncontrolled products from combustion of coal, coke, oil and gasoline. Our towns are girdled with wreckage and the debris of our toys our automobiles and our packaged pleasures. Through uninhibited spraying against one enemy we have destroyed the natural balances our survival requires. All these evils can and must be overcome if America and Americans are to survive; but many of us still conduct ourselves as our ancestors did, stealing from the future for our clear and present profit.

Since riverpolluters and the airpoisoners are not criminal or even bad people, we must presume that they are heirs to the early conviction that sky and water are unowned and that they are limitless. In the light of our practices here at home it is very interesting to me to read of the care taken with the carriers of our probes into space to make utterly sure that they are free of pollution of any kind. We

would not think of doing to the moon what we do everyday to our own dear country.

- All early settlers treated the environment as an enemy.
- Many people today are just as irresponsible as people were in the past.
- John Steinbeck feels there is no solution to the pollution problem.
- People who pollute are bad people.
- There have always been people who care about the environment.
- Steinbeck feels that our survival depends on natural balances.
- Pollution and waste are evil in Steinbeck's opinion.

LESSON 1

Level: Std. 7

Aim: The aim of this lesson is to explain to pupils how to use hints from the context to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Objective: At the end of the lesson the pupils must be able to use hints from the context to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Aids: Transparency, exercise.

Time: 30 minutes

Procedure:

Introduction

Question: What do you do when you read a passage and you get to an unfamiliar word?

Answer: Look it up in the dictionary.

Skip and ignore it.

Read on to see if the rest of the context doesn't help to explain the meaning.

You can guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues. Context clues are hints provided by the words and sentences surrounding the unfamiliar word. These clues are not always clear cut and sometimes there are not enough hints to be able to work out the meaning of a word. Context clues are frequently available to alert readers and readers have to learn to recognize the different kinds of clues.

Presentation

Put transparency 1 on the projector. Cover the hints and explanations. Read the first example to the pupils.

Question: What does origami mean?

Answer: Japanese folding paper.

Question: How did you know it?

Answer: The sentence includes the definition.

Reveal the hint to the pupils and read it aloud to them.

Reveal the explanation and show them the other forms of punctuation that possibly can be used.

Continue like this until all the hints are revealed.

TRANSPARENCY 1:
GUESSING THE MEANING OF WORDS BY USING THE CONTEXT

HINT	EXAMPLE	EXPLANATION
Some sentences set off the definition for a difficult word by means on punctuation.	Origami - Japanese paper folding - is family fun. Fibrin , elastic threads of protein, helps blood to clod.	Dashees - Parentheses () Brackets [] Commas ,
Sometimes helpline words, along with punctuation, provide important clues.	Mary felt perturbed that is, she was greatly disturbed by her sister's actions.	Helping words: that is, meaning, such as, or, is called.
Some sentences tell the oppoosite of what a new word means. From its opposite, you can figure out the meaning of the word.	Parents who constantly spank their children can not be called lenient .	If you are lenient you do not often punish your children. Merciful or gentle would be a food guess for the meaning of lenient . Helping words to show opposites: not, but, although, however, on the other had.
Sometimes you can use your own eperiences to figure out the definition of a word.	The cacophonous rattling made Maria cover her ears.	A noise that would make you cover your ears would be unpleasant or jarring .
Sentences before or after a sentence containing a difficult word sometimes explain the meaning of the word.	Mozart gave his first public recital at the age of six. By age thirteen he had written symphonies and an operetta. He is justly called a child prodigy .	It would certainly take a remarkably talented person to do these things. An extraordinary person , then, would be a prodigy .
Some sentences are written just to give the definitions of difficult words - words that readers will need to know in order to understand what they are reading.	One of the remarkable features of the Nile Valley is the fertility of its soil. This rich earth that supported plant growth made it possible for Egyptians to thrive in a dry region.	The second sentence, which tells you that the soil was rich and that is supported plant growth, explains fertility .
Because some sentences give examples for a new word, you can build a definition.	Select a periodical from among the following: Time, You, Sarie, Fair Lady or Reader's Digest .	The sentence doesn't say that a periodical is a magazine, but you can figure that out from the examples.
Some sentences use a word you do know to help explain a word you do not know.	A formidable enemy is one to be feared.	Formidable - through the clues in this sentence - means fearful or dreadful .

Practice

Put on transparency 2 and let the pupils write down the words with their meanings next to them.

Answers:

- | | | |
|----|-------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | instigate | - bring about |
| 2. | inhibit | - restrain |
| 3. | trivial | - ordinary |
| 4. | ubiquitous | - being everywhere |
| 5. | insecticide | - poison for killing insects |
| | defoliates | - take off the leaves |
| 6. | refrain | - keep oneself from doing it |
| 7. | asses | - fix the amount |

GUESSING THE MEANING OF WORDS BY USING THE CONTEXT
TRANSPARENCY 2

1. Even though Martha was not part of the fight, we know that her gossip helped to instigate trouble between Maria and Jane.
2. Brushing your teeth after every meal may not prevent cavities entirely, but it will inhibit the number of cavities you get.
3. The class covers only the most important philosophical ideas of the nineteenth century, not the trivial, ones.
4. A few years ago there were billboards along every highway in America. Thanks to efforts by people who want to keep our country side beautiful, billboards are no longer ubiquitous, instead they are widely scattered.
5. The insecticide defoliates most trees; unless you want leaves on the ground instead of the branches you'd better not use it to kill insects.
6. Concertgoers are asked to refrain from taking flash pictures, as the bright lights disturb the performers.
7. The judges need several minutes to asses the gymnast's performance.

GUESSING THE MEANING OF WORDS FROM THE CONTEXT

LESSON 2

Level: Std.7

Aim: The aim of the lesson is that the pupils must be able to use clues from the context to guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words.

Objective: At the end of the lesson the pupils must be able to use hints from the context to guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words.

Aids: Exercise.

Time: 30 minutes

Procedure:

Presentation

Review the hints on finding the meaning of unfamiliar words with the pupils. Use transparency 1 of lesson 1.

Practice

Hand out exercise 1 to the pupils. They have to read it and guess the meaning of the underlined words with the help of hints from the context.

GUESSING THE MEANING FROM THE WORD BY USING THE CONTEXT

EXERCISE 1

The first factory icecream in the world, marketed by Jacob Fussell of Baltimore in 1851, probably contained only fresh milk and cream, sugar, eggs, and natural flavouring. These are classical ingredients. Today, a typical supermarket brand contains milk fat and nonfat milk, sugar, corn sweetener, whey, mono, and diglycerides, guar gum, Polysorbate 80, carrageenin, and natural and artificial flavour. Many lists are longer. Because recipes fluctuate with the ingredient market, the same brand may have different compositions from week to week. The trick is to make them all simulate the same icecream.

Essentially, icecream is air, oil and ice crystals suspended in water. The water never completely freezes, because an antifreeze sugar is dissolved in it, making it stronger, more coldproof syrup as more water freezes out. At its optimum dipping temperature, about eight degrees Fahrenheit, a half gallon of icecream contains nine tablespoons of liquid.

Hiding in the liquid are billions of tiny air bubbles and quadrillions of even tinier oil droplets. Because oil and water don't mix, these fat droplets would rather clump together and float to the top, but they can't. They are jacketed with negatively charged proteins, which make them repel each other. Similar forces keep the bubbles in place. Ultimately, icecream is held together electrically. The simplest way to give customers more icecream for their money, says Keeney, is to pump in more air. It is easy. Just turn a silver knob on the freezer and the icecream swells. The manufacturer must be careful, however, not to go over the legal limit of 50 percent air. By federal law, a half gallon of icecream must weight at least two pounds, four ounces. Most brands weigh close to the limit, but expensive ones may be nearly twice as heavy.

Originally, air got into icecream as an accident of stirring, but today it is ushered by pumps and metering valves. "*Icecream is a frozen foam*", says John Speer, president of the icecream manufacturers' lobby. "*You need that air in there! Try squeezing out the air out of a loaf of bread sometime, see what you get*".

It's true, some air is needed in icecream or it won't collapse readily in the mouth. The bubbles should burst like tiny balloons when the heat comes up. But too much air can insulate the interior, slow the melt down, and make the icecream feel strangely warm, more like Dream Whip than icecream. Expensive, quicker melting icecream feel colder.

Occasionally, overinflation occurs. The bubbles overstretch their skins and burst while still in the carton. The icecream shrinks from the walls of the containers, prompting, phone calls from angry consumers.

Recently Keeney confirmed with a manufacturer who had been trying to ship cylindrical cartons of icecream into Colorado. Whenever the trucks climbed into the Rocky Mountains, the air bubbles would expand, puffing up the icecream and blowing the lids off.

"Try *underfilling*", Keeney told him. "*But don't sell that icecream at sea level*".

Milk fat, the prime ingredient of icecream, adds smoothness and richness by lubricating the palate and suffusing it with dozens of volatiles. Found in icecream, it is one of the most complex of all natural oils, comprising more than 150 different fatty acids. To make a quart of cream, a half-ton cow must eat 30 pounds of feed and filter 2 500 gallons of blood through her udder. Because of this and because cream keeps only a week or two under refrigeration, it is by far the costliest ingredient.

"*You don't have to get your milk fat from cream*", Keeney told a class of 85 icecream technicians. "*In fact, you could make a pretty decent icecream without any milk fat at all. Any kind of oil will do vegetable oil, mineral oil, even motor oil, if that's what customers want*".

Pencils were scratching on note books. "*But it is illegal*", Keeney said. "*If you want to label it icecream, you've got to use milk fat. You can use butter, which is just milk fat globules pressed into a cake. Butter will keep for months without much deterioration, and sometimes it'll give you a little more milk fat for your money too. Go ahead and use it, but be careful: The longer any milk product is stored, the greater the chance it will lose flavour notes or develop foreign ones. Some of these stinky compounds in stale milk can be tasted in parts per trillion. That's one drop in all the icecream produced in the U.S. in a week. You're gonna be a lot more confident with fresh cream, believe me*".

Answers:

classical	- standard or first class
fluctuate	- vary irregularly, rise and fall
simulate	- imitate conditions
repel	- ward off, drive back
overinflation	- too much air
prompting	- made, done

- prime - state of highest perfection.
deterioration - make or become worse

Production:

Pupils get a copy of the two advertisements. They have to use context clues to help them to guess the meaning of the underlined words.

Answers:

- incomparable - without an equal
itinerary - record of travel, guidebook
exotic - attractively unusual
epitome - thing that represents another in miniature
free - radicals affecting the foundations
theorize - speculate
chronic - lasting
adequate - sufficient, satisfactory, to the requirements.