THE MODEL OF READING COMPREHENSION DEVELOPMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract. This article explores the development of reading comprehension skills in primary school students, emphasizing its crucial role in academic success and lifelong learning. The proposed model spans from emergent literacy to metacognition, covering key aspects such as phonological awareness, vocabulary acquisition, decoding skills, and comprehension strategies. The article extends its scope to include insights on metacognitive influences and broader impacts on cognitive abilities.

Keywords: primary education, reading comprehension, emergent literacy, phonological awareness, vocabulary acquisition, decoding skills, comprehension strategies, critical thinking, primary school students.

The journey of reading comprehension development in primary school students is a nuanced and interconnected process, essential for academic success and lifelong learning. This article introduces a comprehensive model that delves into the multifaceted aspects influencing this cognitive evolution. Beginning with emergent literacy and progressing through phonological awareness, vocabulary acquisition, decoding skills, comprehension strategies, and culminating in metacognition, the model provides a holistic framework for educators. Beyond academic prowess, it emphasizes the cultivation of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and informed decision-making. The article concludes by highlighting the significance of adopting a comprehensive approach to reading comprehension, serving as a valuable guide for educators and policymakers alike. The incorporation of additional insights from diverse perspectives enhances the understanding of metacognitive influences on language acquisition and the broader impact on individuals' cognitive abilities and decision-making skills.

In the realm of primary education, the cultivation of reading comprehension stands as a pivotal pillar, forming the bedrock for academic achievement and lifelong intellectual growth. This article explores an intricate model that unravels the nuanced journey of reading comprehension development among primary school students, delving into the interconnected facets that shape their cognitive evolution. The development of reading comprehension is a crucial aspect of primary education, laying the foundation for academic success and lifelong learning. This article delves into a comprehensive model that elucidates the multifaceted process of reading comprehension development in primary school students.

Emergent Literacy:

The journey toward proficient reading comprehension begins with emergent literacy. Early exposure to language, vocabulary development, and pre-reading skills set the stage for a child's future reading abilities. A rich literary environment at home and in early education forms the cornerstone of this initial phase. Emergent literacy is described as the behaviors exhibited by very young children when they begin responding to and approximating reading and writing acts. However, literacy extends beyond these acts, encompassing the interrelated aspects of language, such as speaking, listening, reading, writing, and viewing. The concept of 'meaning making'

typically refers to an individual's innate desire, including that of a child, to make sense of environmental stimuli, including texts (Lewis, 1999). The term 'reading comprehension' denotes an individual's, be it a child or any human, ability to derive meaning from printed text (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

Early experiences of meaning-making play a crucial role in comprehension development, thereby enhancing overall reading development (Clay, 2001). This perspective on emergent comprehension emphasizes the significance of children's early experiences and strategy utilization as foundational elements supporting later text comprehension. Furthermore, it sheds light on the often-mentioned yet elusive relationship between personal experiences and reading.

Phonological Awareness:

The model recognizes the significance of phonological awareness in the early stages of reading comprehension development. Students learn to manipulate and recognize the sounds of language, paving the way for decoding skills. Phonics instruction plays a vital role in connecting sounds to written symbols, facilitating the transition from emergent literacy to formal reading. The cornerstone of learning to read lies in phonological awareness, which involves recognizing and manipulating sounds in spoken language. Phonemic awareness, a component of phonological awareness, specifically entails the ability to focus on individual sounds within a word.

Vocabulary Acquisition:

A robust vocabulary is essential for understanding written texts. The model emphasizes the continual expansion of students' vocabulary through explicit instruction, exposure to diverse texts, and context-based learning. The ability to comprehend and infer meaning relies heavily on a rich and varied vocabulary. The process of learning new words is called vocabulary acquisition which consists of three steps like learning to pronounce the word correctly, learning the meaning of the word, the definition and how to use it in the sentence. Restricted vocabulary impedes students from effectively communicating in the learning language, emphasizing the importance of addressing vocabulary enrichment in the teaching and learning process. Linguistic research underscores the pivotal role of vocabulary acquisition, recognizing it as a central element in language education. Developing an extensive and profound vocabulary is crucial for those aiming to become proficient in a foreign language. It can be contended that a deficiency in vocabulary knowledge often exerts a more pronounced influence on the clarity and fluency of spoken and written language than insufficient grammatical understanding or subpar pronunciation (Hedge, 2000).

Decoding Skills:

The development of decoding skills is a critical component of the reading comprehension model. As students' progress, they refine their ability to decode words, enabling them to read more fluently and comprehend complex texts. Balanced literacy approaches, including phonics and sight-word recognition, contribute to proficient decoding. Decoding in reading is the process of translating printed words into speech. Decoding, involving the correlation between letters and sounds known as phonics, relies on understanding phonemes – the smallest units of sound in a language – and phonemic awareness, the skill of hearing and manipulating these sounds. It is the swift translation of print into speech by matching letters or combinations (graphemes) to their corresponding sounds (phonemes) and recognizing patterns that form syllables and words. The brain's language processing area automates this process

Regrettably, approximately 30 percent of students face challenges accessing this brain region, necessitating explicit and systematic instruction in decoding strategies. This approach

starts with fundamental sound/letter concepts and progresses to more intricate ones. Proven as the most effective, this method of phonics instruction aids students in acquiring decoding skills.

Decoding is foundational, as it underpins all other aspects of reading instruction. Without proficient decoding, reading lacks fluency, vocabulary remains limited, and comprehension suffers. Attempting to teach advanced reading strategies to students struggling with decoding is ineffective – akin to banging our heads against a wall.

Comprehension Strategies:

Moving beyond basic decoding, the model integrates comprehension strategies that empower students to understand and analyze texts. Explicit instruction in strategies such as predicting, questioning, summarizing, and making connections fosters deeper engagement with the material. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding students to apply these strategies across various genres and text types. According to Vandergrift (2003), guiding learners through the reading process not only imparts knowledge for improved reading skills but also motivates them and empowers them to control their learning. Linse (2005) asserts that teaching reading comprehension is essentially instructing students on deriving meaning, analyzing, and synthesizing what they read.

In the realm of second language literature, strategies enhancing learning effectiveness are commonly referred to as learning strategies. On the other hand, comprehension or reading strategies reveal how readers approach tasks, make sense of the material, and navigate challenges when understanding falters. Grabe (2009) defines a strategic reader as one who routinely applies effective strategies based on goals, reading tasks, and strategic processing abilities.

Moving beyond basic comprehension, the instructional model integrates the development of analytical and critical thinking skills as students' progress. This phase entails evaluating texts, discerning authorial intent, and participating in discussions that deepen content understanding. Students are encouraged to question, infer, and form opinions grounded in textual evidence.

Textual Analysis and Critical Thinking:

As students advance, the model incorporates the development of analytical and critical thinking skills. Students learn to evaluate texts, identify authorial intent, and engage in discussions that promote a deeper understanding of content. This stage encourages students to question, infer, and form opinions based on textual evidence.

Metacognition and Reflective Reading:

The final stage of the model highlights the importance of metacognition – the ability to think about one's thinking. Students are encouraged to reflect on their reading processes, monitor comprehension, and employ strategies to overcome challenges independently. This metacognitive awareness enhances lifelong reading skills and self-directed learning.

Metacognition, considered both trait-like and state-like, plays a significant role in second language (L2) development (Sato, 2022; Efklides, 2006). Its influence extends longitudinally, impacting EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition (Teng, 2021) and reading/writing performance (Teng & Zhang, 2021). The application of metacognition in second language acquisition shows promise in enhancing reading comprehension (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012) and is identified as a crucial predictor of success in foreign language learning (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

Research suggests that metacognitive strategies, encompassing planning, monitoring, and evaluation, positively correlate with foreign language reading comprehension (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Veenman's model, featuring three stages of metacognition – planning, monitoring, and

evaluation – outlines goal-setting, progress assessment, and reflective adjustment as integral components (Veenman, 2005). Beyond academic performance, metacognition's impact extends to problem-solving skills and decision-making. Studies by Dinsmore et al. (2008) and Bruine de Bruin et al. (2007) respectively indicate that metacognition improves problem-solving skills and decision-making abilities.

As we unveil the model delineating the development of reading comprehension in primary school students, it becomes evident that this journey is both interconnected and progressive. By addressing emergent literacy, phonological awareness, vocabulary acquisition, decoding skills, comprehension strategies, textual analysis, critical thinking, and metacognition, educators can construct a holistic framework fostering proficient and lifelong readers in the primary school context. Beyond the immediate academic landscape, this model serves not only as a guide for educators and policymakers but also emphasizes the vital role of a comprehensive approach in shaping well-rounded individuals capable of metacognitive reflection, problem-solving, and informed decision-making. This multifaceted model is a testament to the intricate dynamics at play in the development of reading comprehension and underscores the importance of a holistic educational approach.

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