



ENGL 157: COMMUNICATION SKILLS I

Lecture 13: Text Comprehension & Summary Writing

AIMS OF THE LECTURE

The aims of this lecture are as follows:

- to introduce students to how to read comprehension texts
- to discuss how to answer comprehension questions
- to learn about summary and how to write a summary of a text

READING & COMPREHENSION

- Reading is not merely a physical or visual contact with written symbols. It is rather a way of decoding, interpreting or making meaning from these symbols.
- Two kinds of reading can be discussed, which are **reading aloud** and **reading for comprehension**.
 - **Reading Aloud:** Generally occurs during early years, and the focus is to help readers acquaint themselves with the relationship between the alphabetic symbols, or their combinations, and the sounds associated with them.
 - **Reading for comprehension:** This is the kind of reading which involves the understanding of the phonetic components and the meanings that are embedded in the stresses and intonations. Reading here is a direct relationship between orthography (writing) and meaning.

IMPORTANCE OF READING

- It gives a reader/person access to (new) information.
- It enables a reader/person to crosscheck information received from other people.
- Reading helps a reader/person to do revision to what has been written.
- Reading helps a reader/person to know the demands of questions and other instructions.

COMPREHENSION

- Comprehension is the understanding and interpretation of what is read. To be able to accurately understand written materials, learners need to be able to achieve the following:
 - decode what they read;
 - make connections between what they read and what they already know; and
 - think deeply about what they have read.

(Wornyo 2013)

COMPREHENSION

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- One big part of comprehension is having sufficient vocabulary, or knowing the meanings of enough words.
- Readers who have strong comprehension are able to draw conclusions about what they read – what is important, what is a fact, what caused an event to happen, which characters are funny. **Thus, comprehension involves combining reading with thinking and reasoning.**

(readingrockets.org)



COMPREHENSION

con't, comprehension involves applying various skills to make sense of what one reads and hears.

- On the other hand, comprehension skills involve the ability to use context and previous knowledge to enhance reading and understanding. These skills include the following:
 - knowing the meanings of words (vocabulary)
 - detecting key words, such as those identifying topics and ideas
 - guessing meaning from context
 - recognizing grammatical word classes
 - knowing how words combine to form bigger units of meaning (syntax)
 - detecting sentence constituents, such as subject, verb, object, etc.
 - recognizing typical word-order patterns
 - recognizing cohesive devices
 - using prediction as an aid to reading

(Afful, Appiah & Mensah 2013)

TECHNIQUES IN READING A COMPREHENSION TEXT

- **Skimming:** This is a reading technique that aims at understanding or obtaining facts. It does not seek to identify words, figures, or phrases, but rather to identify the gist of a story or text.
- **Scanning:** It involves reading rapidly for a specific fact in the material. This is a reading exercise to identify or locate some word, expression or figure on a written or typed text.
- **Close reading:** This reading technique aims at yielding the full meaning of a text.

NB: Extensive Reading (i.e., reading to get oneself informed) Vs.

Intensive reading (i.e., reading to gain deep knowledge; usually for professional or academic purposes.)

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD COMPREHENSION SKILLS

It is important to acquire good comprehension skills because of the following:

- it helps us to increase our knowledge
- it helps us to enrich our vocabulary
- it enhances our ability to communicate with others
- it helps us to exhibit the appropriate emotional responses to what we read or listen to
- it helps us to develop critical thinking skills
- it makes us observant readers and keen listeners

(Afful, Appiah & Mensah 2013)



STRATEGIES IN UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSION

1. **The use of transitions:** Knowing the functions of transitions will guide the reader to be able to locate important points in passages. As the reader begins to take notice of transitions and their functions, this will serve as discourse signals that will direct them to vital information in the text. Transitions carry the reader across from one thought or idea to the other. (e.g. transitions that show addition – also, in addition, furthermore; transition that show contract – but, however, yet; etc.)

2. **Identifying main ideas:** Reading and identifying what the main point of the author is would help the reader to improve upon their comprehension of text and to answer comprehension questions accurately and appropriately. In text construction, a paragraph is considered as a unit of information unified by a controlling idea (main idea).

STRATEGIES IN UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSIONS

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3. Patterns of organization: A reader is able to understand a comprehension passage by knowing the principles that govern paragraph structure and patterns of organization. Authors will help readers in understanding a comprehension passage by introducing the main ideas, and arranging the supporting details in several common patterns including cause and effect, comparison and/or contrast, and time order relation.

4. Drawing inferences: The reader's ability to discover ideas not stated explicitly or directly in the text is important for a full understanding of what the author means. Drawing inferences from what we read involves discovering the ideas that are not stated directly and this can be achieved by using one's experiences and general knowledge to make informed guesses based on facts observed.

TYPES OF COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- **Content Questions:** These are questions that the answers can be found directly in the passage (the comprehension text). Such questions begin with who, when, what, how, which, etc.
- **Inferential/Deductive Questions:** These are questions that the answers cannot be found directly in the passage but there are cues in the passage for you to deduce the answer.
- **Appreciative Questions** (questions on figures of speech): These are questions about the writer's choice of words. (e.g. the use of simile, metaphor, etc.)
- **Vocabulary in Context Questions:** These questions require providing a word or a phrase that means the same and can be used to replace a word used in the passage. These questions are answered appropriately by taking the context in which the word is used into consideration, and not necessarily the dictionary meaning of the word in question.
- **Summary Type Questions:** These questions require stating only the main idea(s).
- **Quoting:** These questions require that you quote a portion of the text to support your answer or opinion.

SOME FIGURES OF SPEECH USE IN COMPREHENSION TEXTS

- **Simile**
- **Metaphor**
- **Personification**
- **Irony**
- **Paradox**
- **Oxymoron**
- **Euphemism**
- **Hyperbole**
- **Homophones**
- **Idioms**

READING TECHNIQUE: “SQ3R”

- The **SQ3R** study method is a popular system designed to strengthen students' reading muscles.
- One of the greatest benefits of **SQ3R** technique is that it helps you understand more of what you are reading, especially when you are reading it *the first time*.
- SQ3R stands for:
 - **Survey**
 - **Question**
 - **Read**
 - **Recite**
 - **Review**

(www.khanacademy.org)

READING TECHNIQUE: "SQ3R"

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- Step-by-step approach:
 - **Step 1: Survey:** Do not jump straight into reading the passage; glance through or survey the passage to identify the subject matter, the point of view, and the overall purpose of the passage.
 - **Step 2: Question:** After surveying or glancing through the passage and you are interested, then come up with a couple of questions about the passage. E.g. *What is this passage about? Why does this passage exist? What question is this passage trying to answer?*
 - **Step 3: Read (R1):** Start reading the passage – **actively**. (e.g. Underline and/or circle claims; Underline and/or circle key words; Make quick notes in the margins of the passage, etc.)
 - **Step 4: Recite (R2):** This is the most important part of effective **Active Reading**. The second "R" stands for Recite – **in your own words**.
 - **Step 5: Review (R3):** Once you reach the end of the passage, say back to yourself what the point of the whole passage is - again, **using your own words**.

(www.khanacademy.org)



www.knust.edu.gh

STRATEGIES IN ANSWERING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Take note of what exactly a question requires that you do.
- Make sure that there is no grammatical/expression error in your answers.
- Avoid lifting a sentence that contains elements of the required answer from the passage.
- Where another word/expression is expected to be given to replace a word/expression in the passage, consider all options that come to your mind critically to pick the one that fits in perfectly.
- Candidates' knowledge of grammatical units is also tested in the comprehension exercises. This makes a demand on candidates' ability to recognize the different word classes, phrases, and clause structures as well as their grammatical functions in contexts.
- A good knowledge of the commonest figurative expressions like simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia, and idiomatic expressions is necessary for comprehension to take place.
- Limit your answers to the information contained in or can be inferred from the passage before you.

PRACTICAL SESSION ON COMPREHENSION TEXTS

Discussion of sample comprehension texts and how to answer comprehension questions

SUMMARY WRITING

- A summary is a shortened form of a text.
- Writing a summary involves writing someone else's piece of work or writing in your own words as much as possible and presenting the original work very briefly.
- It involves the attempt to reduce a whole text or paragraph to about a third of its length.
- It also involves a brief statement of the main points of a piece of writing.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUMMARY

- A summary re-states. Thus, when writing a summary it must restate what the original writer has said and not comments or judgements on the piece of writing.
- A summary must be brief.
- It must focus on the essential points only. Descriptive details and examples are not included in a summary. When writing a summary, it is important to distinguish between the main points and the illustrative details.
- It must be in your own words as much as possible.

GUIDELINES IN WRITING A GOOD SUMMARY

In order to write a good summary, it is important to take note of the following:

- The main idea of each paragraph in the text
- The supporting ideas
- Transitional markers/sentence modifiers

GUIDELINES IN WRITING A GOOD SUMMARY con't

When writing the summary there are three main requirements:

1. The summary should cover the original as a whole.
2. The material should be presented in a neutral fashion.
3. The summary should be a condensed version of the material, presented in your own words.

ANSWERING SUMMARY QUESTIONS

For instance: *Read the passage below carefully and then answer in your own words, as far as possible, the questions on it.* In such questions, what you need to do is:

- To remove all examples which are meant for clarification
- To remove all parenthetical examples
- To avoid rhetorical questions
- To exclude any ideas that are not stated in the passage
- To note that in summarizing, the points in the summary do not correspond sentence by sentence, with the passage
- To note that you are not to put in more than one idea in one sentence unless the question expressly asks for more than one idea
- To watch out for the writer's use of signal words or linking expressions such as *again, next, one, two, additionally*, etc.
- To note that some writers may sometimes use the first paragraph (and second) to make general comments but the main points may not be found there
- Exclude illustrations

PRACTICAL SESSION ON SUMMARY WRITING

Discussion of sample texts and how to summarize them

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