

Fluent Readers: Chunking as a Strategy in Teaching Reading

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to know whether chunking strategy is effective in improving students' reading comprehension and their attitude towards learning using the strategy. This research focused on improving students' reading comprehension. The instruments used were reading text, pre-vocabulary sheet, and plenary sheet. The findings of this research showed that chunking strategy was effective in improving students' reading comprehension. This activity was successful in solving students' problem in comprehending a text.

Keywords: Chunking Strategy; Reading Comprehension.

Introduction

The power of chunking as a strategy in reading a text ensures students' progress. Chunking allows one to read a text in parts or sections and yet comprehend the whole text. When a long string of information is broken into chunks, the focus on the text increases. This model of reading gives a sense of achievement to students and the teacher as well. It helps them to implement this strategy in their everyday reading, thereby enhancing their reading skill. It not only increases their reading speed but also enriches their vocabulary. I employ this strategy with students every semester and find them quite interested in doing the activity. Never is a sign of passiveness found throughout the session!

Material considered for activity

'6 Ways You CAN do University and Travel at the Same Time' by Vicky Philpott (*n.d.*)

Student Sample: 60 Students

Background

I asked the students, "What do you read in your everyday life?" Students came up with answers such as story books, comics, magazines, newspaper articles, letters, and menu cards. I told them, "You decide to work in the vacation and your friend proposes a long tour. Both of you are uncertain and approach your counsellor who hands over an article by Vicky Philpott and thereby you both decide to do study and travel simultaneously.

I started discussing some vocabulary items as a pre-reading activity, i.e. before they were asked to read the text on their own. It was quite encouraging and promising for the students to begin their chunk reading.

Pre Teaching Vocabulary

1. Semester / sə'mes.tə/

- **Meaning**

I explained the word to them using it in a context:

“I studied my UG and PG taking year-end exams. Do you do your course now in the same way?”

When they came up with the word *semester*, I asked them:

F Is it a half year or a year you spend in a semester?

F Did I spend a semester on a course during my study?

- **Form**

I asked them to develop two sentences using the word on flash cards and to break down the individual items in the structure.

- **Pronunciation**

I uttered the word asking everyone to repeat together at the same time. Then, students at random were asked to repeat the word.

2. *hang out* / hæŋ.aʊt/

- **Meaning**

I announced:

“My colleagues told me in the staff room that my student Ms. Kiran hangs out with boys too much. I wish she would stop hanging out with that crowd of boys.”

Then I asked them:

- Does Ms. Kiran spend too much time with boys?
- Do my colleagues object to Ms. Kiran

talking to boys?

- Do I decide to reduce her moving with boys?

Students by this time understood that *to hang out* means *to spend a lot of time*.

- **Form**

I asked students to develop two sentences using the word on flash cards and to break down the individual items in the structure.

- **Pronunciation**

I asked everyone to repeat together at the same time. Then, I selected students at random to repeat.

3. *Weekend* / 'wi:kend/

- **Meaning**

I told the students:

“We managed the weekend in between together, mostly catching up on domestic chores – Friday night in the downstairs laundry room of my apartment.”

Then I asked them:

- Did I go outing in my weekend?
- Which days do you think I spend on domestic chores?
- Was it a two-day weekend?

- **Form**

I asked them to develop two sentences using the word on flash cards and to break down the individual items in the structure.

- **Pronunciation**

I asked everyone to repeat together at the same time. I also selected students at random to repeat.

Justification of authentic material (Reading)

The material is appropriate for use with my students in terms of: a) their age; b) their number; c) their semi-urban exposure; d) cultural appropriateness; e) their needs; f) their interests; and g) the level of their language ability. Students were focused already on ‘systems and skills’ in the previous sessions and they needed to upgrade their skill in reading. The duration of each session was 45 minutes and their communicative ability and zeal to learn allowed for practice to develop their language skills. The handouts were designed suitable for their intended use so that they would facilitate specific instructional outcomes. Students would face a dilemma between movie/class; picnic/attendance, library/sms but they learnt how to balance them.

Receptive skill task design

A: Two subskills chosen: a. skimming; **b.** scanning

a. Task designed for *Skimming*

The gist reading came in hand for them to talk after an opportunity to practise and to improve their language skills considering their communicative purposes for real world uses. While they were on the task designed for skimming, I encouraged and included students into the team with ease. Planning and rolling out the task on my part ensured

their skill development.

Aim: To enable students to pick up some of the content

- I displayed pictures. (1min)
- I asked them to match with the cuttings of 8 subheadings and handouts were distributed (1m) after an ICQ: “Do you paste sub-headings for each picture? Do you work individually? (1min)
- Whoever matched the sub-heading with a picture had to justify it. (5 min)
- I asked them to confirm.
- I introduced three words: *semester; hang out; weekends.* (2 min)

Feedback

- I asked them to put pictures as in the article individually. (2 min)
- They verified the order in pairs. (2 min)

b. Task designed for *Scanning*

It helped them to improve their fluency and accuracy when some awareness was created about intensive and extensive reading when the task designed for scanning was rolled out. Reading through scanning helped them to run their eyes over the text looking for specific pieces of information they must use while progressing with the task. They demonstrated accuracy and fluency in their ability to identify words and to comprehend the text.

Aim: To enable students to acquire familiarity of content in a short span of time

- The text was divided into chunks and

students were put into groups. (1 min)

- According to Scrivener (2011a, p.184), “Reading to oneself is like listening, a receptive skill ... People read at different speeds and in different ways... [those] who can control the speed they work at in a reading activity...” Each group did the segment-reading for specific details. By doing chunk-reading students learnt how to put huge amounts of information together in a short period of time. (8 min)
- They were regrouped such that each group consisted of members reading different chunks. Care was taken to include readers from all chunks into a group; they were asked to share their reading and the rest had to listen to comprehend. (7 min)

Feedback

- I instructed them to come up with five *Yes/No* questions. (2 min)

Productive skill task design

Aim: To develop students’ ability to showcase their writing and speaking skills

I think the procedures, materials, method, gestures, seating, grouping, appointing a spokesperson and silence while reading employed by me, enable the students to respond accurately during a task designed to showcase their productive skill. I hope to encourage them to collect and read newspaper articles. By raising their awareness I can make my students find out easily overall/specific information in their everyday academic activity.

Writing and Speaking

I asked the students to write a post card earlier. I introduced and summarised the main writing task, as suggested by Scrivener (2011a, p. 194). Each one wrote a post card on: ‘Express 5 curious facts about study vs. vacation’. They had already brainstormed the topic and were familiar with the vocabulary, so they developed a post card.

- I asked them to observe other students’ post cards and to make notes. (10 min)
- Further, they were asked to recommend to decide the best card from each group (other than their own) and designate them as leaders. (3 min)

Feedback

I asked the leaders to conduct a plenary and the other members of the group were asked to respond. They were asked to prepare *True/False* type of statements for the plenary. The confidence of the students was built; they were eager to speak and their sense of achievement promoted a student-centric environment. I shared what was observed and noted to reinforce learning through a quick feedback session. (4 min)

References

Philpott, V. (*n.d.*). 6 Ways You CAN do University and Travel at the Same Time. URL: <https://www.gapyear.com/articles/travel-tips/6-ways-you-can-do-university-and-travel-at-the-same-time>

Scrivener, J. (2011a). *Learning teaching*. CUP.

Scrivener, J. (2011b). *Classroom management techniques*. CUP.

Appendix – 1

Plenary as Feedback for Productive Skill Task Design (Students were asked to conduct it.)

Say yes/no in a flash.

1. Studying abroad and living somewhere may not be exciting. T/F
2. Money is not an issue as many EU countries offer study for free. T/F
3. Studying abroad for a semester within a course is possible with many UK universities. T/F
4. Use always your vacation sensibly. T/F
5. There are plenty of options to travel at low cost. T/F
6. Vicky Philpott worked as a radio DJ and medical camp counsellor. T/F
7. Winter isn't a great time to travel abroad. T/F
8. Bringing your local culture in the UK is a good strategy. T/F

9. Travel vicariously grants you free stays globally. T/F
10. One can flash the student card in Europe to see places. T/F
11. Hostels in the UK are costly. T/F
12. Travel cost becomes cheaper in all UK flights if there is no luggage. T/F
13. The writer recommends not to waste holidays. T/F
14. Travel fully and don't hesitate to repeat a year. T/F
15. Proper organizational skills and productivity levels allow balance between both work and fun. T/F

Key

1. F. 2. T 3. T 4. T 5. T 6. F
7. F 8. T 9. T 10. T 11. F 12. F
13. T 14. F 15. T

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