Developing ELL Reading Comprehension Skills: SQP2RS
by Raj Khatri

Studies show that reading improves readers' comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing, so second language scholars have been constantly looking for ways to best teach reading to second language readers. Reading is very important; however, Grabe (2007, p. 4) indicates that reading is taken for granted by many, and that only "little effort and little planning" is applied while reading, so teaching reading strategies seem to be inevitable. Reading strategies are the mental operations or the process employed by readers to make sense of what they read, such as guessing word meanings from context and evaluating their correctness, skimming, scanning, predicting, activating general knowledge, making inferences, and identifying main ideas (Brantmeier, 2002). For learners to read and comprehend well, a variety of reading strategies have been identified. Metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies are the three types of learning strategies that have been identified and discussed in Malley and Chamot (1990).

In the present context, SQP2RS (pronounced "squeepers") is a multistep instructional framework for teaching reading (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008; Vogt, & Echevarria, 2008). I have been incorporating this as a strategy in my ESL classes at a variety of educational settings in Canada since I became familiar with the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model during my master's program at the University of Central Oklahoma in the United States in 2008. The whole process creates a nonthreatening environment in which students feel very comfortable taking risks with language and participating in group activities, which I have observed during the application process of this framework in my ESL classes. This framework also helps students move toward autonomy when activities such as explicit teaching, modeling, providing opportunities to practice, and independent application take place. Following is the procedure for incorporating this in class.

Implementing SQP2RS

Survey

Before the unit to be taught is discussed, students skim and scan the text, which helps them activate their background knowledge and experience. Rather than remaining off-task and mumbling among themselves, students start activating their schemata and making sense out of things during their skimming. This process sets the stage for them to learn some ideas that they think will be studied in that text. I often do think-alouds at this point and model my thinking process for students, and prepare them for the steps useful for this process.

Question

In groups or partners, students discuss and come up with two or three questions likely to be answered while or after reading the text. Then I write down students' questions on the board, and mark, with asterisks/stars, the questions that most groups come up with. Students have opportunities to see which questions are being raised most often, which can be one of the key ideas of the day's reading.

Predict

Students then, as a whole class, determine four or five key concepts likely to be learned while reading. At this stage, they predict which key concepts would be chiefly studied. I encourage students to voluntarily express their ideas, and at the same time, make sure that all students participate in these activities. In fact, this process builds on the questions students generated during the Question stage. Narrowing focus is absolutely essential in this stage.

Read

Students start reading the text in pairs or groups. While reading, they look for answers to the questions that they have come up with, and confirm or disconfirm their predictions at this stage. As Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2008) suggest, students can use sticky notes or tabs, or highlighter tapes to mark the places in the text that answer their questions and confirm their predictions.

Respond

Students answer questions and discuss their predictions with the teacher and the rest of the class. They formulate new questions and make new predictions for the next section, if there are any other sections. I discuss the key concepts or predictions in detail with the class as a whole.

Summarize

In pairs or groups, students, orally or in writing, summarize the text's key concepts, using key vocabulary. Depending upon the length of the reading, I usually choose 10 content words and write them on the board. Students are provided with wait time during which they interact among themselves and come up with the main concepts, using the key vocabulary given on the board. Students and I enjoy the whole process very much, incorporating SQP2RS in my ESL classes.

Reflection

During the process, students are metacognitively, cognitively, and socially engaged, both in their input and output processes. Sometimes I see them self-monitoring, such as correcting their speech for accuracy in grammar and content words while at other times, they are busy taking notes, underlining key concept words, writing down main ideas, consciously making connections between what they read and what they have experienced in life and discussing with their partner or group members. And, at some other times, I observe and appreciate their critically thinking over what they have been reading.

Using SQP2RS thus helps teachers facilitate their reading classes, and it assists students in developing their reading comprehension skills, helping them to construct relevant meanings of their reading through multifaceted language play. The process also helps students succeed in making connections between what they are already aware of and what they are reading, which ultimately helps make their reading move from the level of "abstractness" to "situatedness" or "authenticity." Finally, it is strongly suggested that teachers explicitly provide instruction on,

model, and let the students practice the SQP2RS process before they fully incorporate it when reading in class.

References

Brantmeier, C. (2002). Second language reading strategy research at the secondary and university levels: Variations, disparities, and generalizability. *The Reading Matrix, 2*(3), 1–14.

Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. J. (2008). *Making content comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP Model.* New York, NY: Pearson Education.

Grabe, W. (2007). *Reading in a second language: Moving from theory to practice*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

O'Malley, J. J., & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Vogt, M., & Echevarria, J. (2008). *99 ideas and activities for teaching English learners with the SIOP Model*. New York, NY: Pearson Education.

_____

[Raj Khatri](#) is an ESL instructor at Camosun College and doctoral student at the Department of Linguistics of the University of Victoria, and has facilitated ESL and EAP classes in a variety of settings in Canada and abroad, including at the University of Regina and Toronto Catholic District School Board. A member of TESL Canada, Ontario College of Teachers, TESOL and IATEFL, Raj keeps interest in second language reading strategies, intercultural communication, and second language writing.