

Reading Comprehension: Comparing High & Low Achievers

Est. Time: 90 Minutes

Objective

Understand how low-achieving and high-achieving students approach academic reading tasks and employ reading comprehension strategies.

Overview

Reading in the content areas (e.g., social studies, science) is quite different from reading for enjoyment. Successful performance of middle and high school students in content areas depends on strong *academic literacy skills*—skills needed for the varieties of reading, learning, and understanding that are specifically related to academic tasks in content areas. A surprising number of middle and high school students lack literacy skills and would benefit from explicit content-area reading instruction. This is especially the case for students with a learning disability (LD), who often have difficulty processing information, which affects their ability to comprehend text. This puts them at greater risk for reading comprehension problems. Even those who are efficient at decoding words often do not use strategies to monitor their understanding of text as they read, make connections to what they already know, or identify relevant information. Although they would benefit from explicit reading instruction, students generally do not receive this type of instruction in the content areas, largely perhaps because teachers assume students already possess such skills, having picked them up in the earlier grades.

Activity

1. Make a list of the reasons you think your low-achieving students struggle.
2. Administer the attached questionnaire (see the end of this document), the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARS) Version 1.0, to a minimum of four students in your classroom (two low-achieving students and two high-achieving students).

Questions/Discussion Topics

Compare the use of reading strategies by the low-achieving and high-achieving students and answer the following questions.

- a. Prior to administering the evaluation, why did you think the low-achieving students struggled?
- b. Did the results of the evaluation confirm your suspicions, or did they reveal something unexpected?
- c. Prior to administering the evaluation, did you ever consider that the low-achieving students could benefit from explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies? Explain.
- d. After reviewing the results, do you still feel the same way? Explain.
- e. After reviewing the results, do you think that the high-achieving students would also benefit from explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies? Explain.

Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARS) Version 1.0

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DIRECTIONS: Listed below are statements about what people do when they read academic or school-related materials such as textbooks, library books, etc. Five numbers follow each statement (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) and each number means the following:

- **1** means “I **never or almost never** do this.”
- **2** means “I do this **only occasionally.**”
- **3** means “I **sometimes** do this.” (About **50%** of the time.)
- **4** means “I **usually** do this.”
- **5** means “I **always or almost always** do this.”

After reading each statement, **circle the number** (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that applies to you using the scale provided. Please note that there are **no right or wrong answers** to the statements in this inventory.

TYPE	STRATEGIES	SCALE				
		1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	4. I preview the text to see what it's about before reading it.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	5. When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	6. I summarize what I read to reflect on important information in the text.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	7. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	8. I read slowly but carefully to be sure I understand what I'm reading.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	9. I discuss what I read with others to check my understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	10. I skim the text first by noting characteristics like length and organization.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	11. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	12. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	13. I adjust my reading speed according to what I'm reading.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	14. I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	15. I use reference materials such as dictionaries to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	16. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I'm reading.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	17. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	18. I stop from time to time and think about what I'm reading.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	19. I use context clues to help me better understand what I'm reading.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	20. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	21. I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	22. I use typographical aids like bold face and italics to identify key information.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	23. I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	24. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	25. I check my understanding when I come across conflicting information.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	26. I try to guess what the material is about when I read.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	27. When text becomes difficult, I re-read to increase my understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
SUP	28. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.	1	2	3	4	5
GLOB	29. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	1	2	3	4	5
PROB	30. I try to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	1	2	3	4	5

Reference: Mokhtari, K., & Reichard, C. (2002). Assessing students' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 94 (2), 249-259.

Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory
SCORING RUBRIC

Student Name: _____ Age: _____ Date: _____

Grade in School: 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th College Other

1. Write your response to each statement (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) in each of the blanks.
 2. Add up the scores under each column. Place the result on the line under each column.
 3. Divide the score by the number of statements in each column to get the average for each subscale.
 4. Calculate the average for the inventory by adding up the subscale scores and dividing by 30.
 5. Compare your results to those shown below.
 6. Discuss your results with your teacher or tutor.
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Global Reading Strategies (GLOB Subscale)	Problem- Solving Strategies (PROB Subscale)	Support Reading Strategies (SUP Subscale)	Overall Reading Strategies
1. _____	8. _____	2. _____	GLOB _____
3. _____	11. _____	5. _____	
4. _____	13. _____	6. _____	PROB _____
7. _____	16. _____	9. _____	
10. _____	18. _____	12. _____	SUP _____
14. _____	21. _____	15. _____	
17. _____	27. _____	20. _____	
19. _____	30. _____	24. _____	
22. _____		28. _____	
23. _____			
25. _____			
26. _____			
29. _____			
_____ GLOB Score	_____ PROB Score	_____ SUP Score	_____ Overall Score
_____ GLOB Mean	_____ PROB Mean	_____ SUP Mean	_____ Overall Mean

KEY TO AVERAGES: 3.5 or higher = High 2.5 – 3.4 = Medium 2.4 or lower = Low

INTERPRETING YOUR SCORES: The overall average indicates how often you use reading strategies when reading academic materials. The average for each subscale of the inventory shows which group of strategies (i.e., global, problem-solving, and support strategies) you use most when reading. With this information, you can tell if you are very high or very low in any of these strategy groups. It is important to note, however, that the best possible use of these strategies depends on your reading ability in English, the type of material read, and your purpose for reading it. A low score on any of the subscales or parts of the inventory indicates that there may be some strategies in these parts that you might want to learn about and consider using when reading (adapted from Oxford 1990: 297-300).