MORE THAN READING STRATEGIES

Developing Metacognitive EAL Readers

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LA TROBE UNIVERSITY



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

La Trobe University acknowledges our campuses are located on the lands of many Traditional Custodians in Victoria and New South Wales. We recognise their ongoing connection to the land and value their unique contribution to the University and wider Australian society.

La Trobe University is committed to providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, both as individuals and communities, through teaching, learning, research and partnerships across all our campuses.





OBJECTIVES

01 BACKGROUND

02 COGNITIVE AND METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES

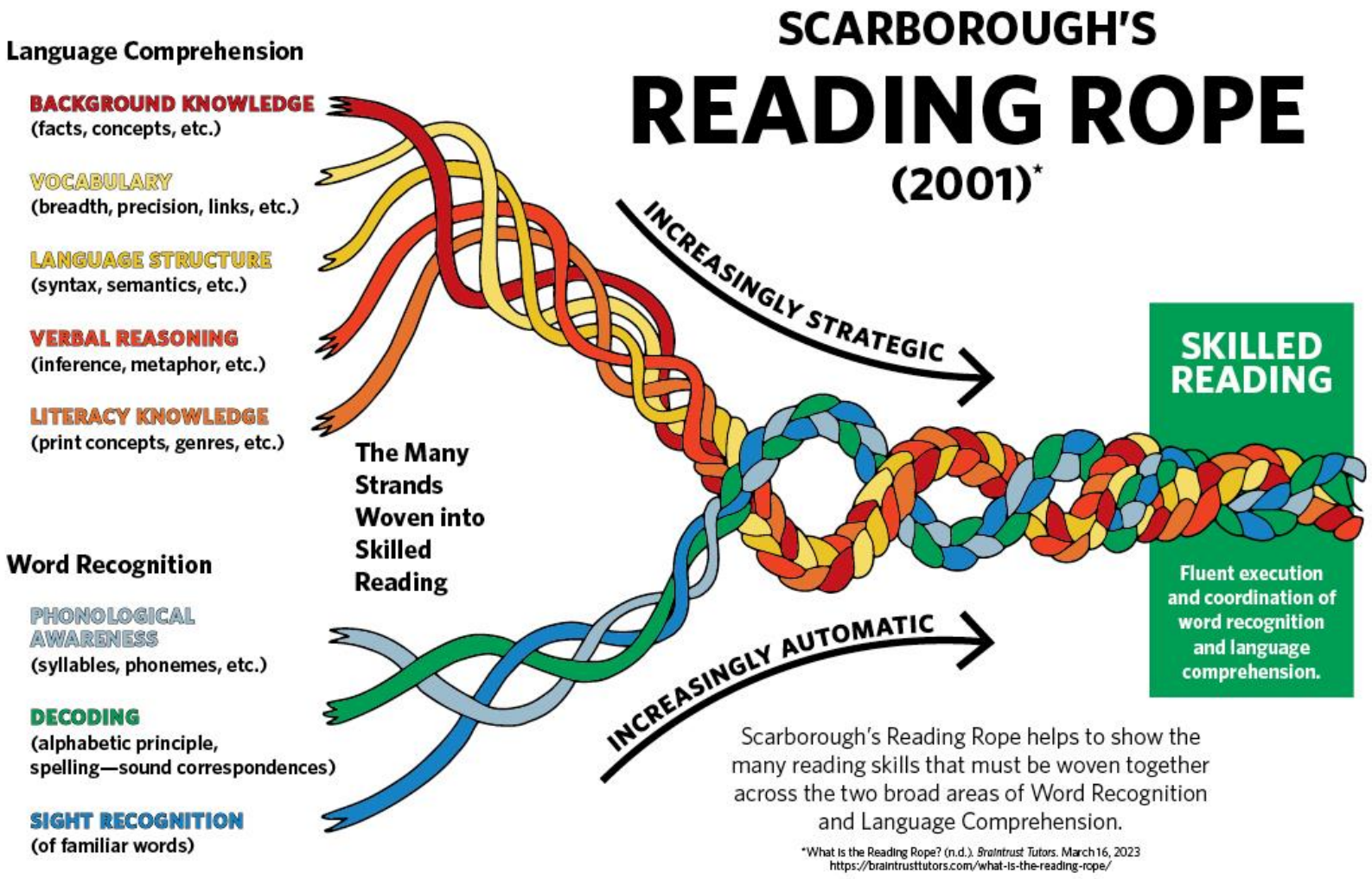
03 IS TEACHING METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES IMPACTFUL?

04 HOW DO WE TEACH METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES ?

SOME BACKGROUND



WHAT IS READING?



Scarborough's Reading Rope helps to show the many reading skills that must be woven together across the two broad areas of Word Recognition and Language Comprehension.

*What Is the Reading Rope? (n.d.). *Braintrust Tutors*. March 16, 2023 https://braintrusttutors.com/what-is-the-reading-rope/

The Road to Reading for English Learners

Leveraging Oral Language Development to Support Reading Development

Oral language development and all components of language comprehension and word recognition must become increasingly automatic, and deployed strategically, to lead to skilled, fluent reading for English Learners.

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

- **Background Knowledge:** Information and Experiences Relevant to the Topic
- **Vocabulary:** Semantic Connections, Morphology, Meanings, Context, Retrieval
- **Language Structures:** Syntax, Word Phrases, Morphology
- **Reasoning Skills:** Analogy, Inference, Implicit Learning, Critical Thinking
- **Literacy Knowledge:** Print and Literacy Conventions, Genres

ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Second Language Acquisition
Metalinguistic Awareness
Linguistic Scaffolds

WORD RECOGNITION

- **Phonological Awareness:** Phonemes, Syllables, Onsets, Rimes
- **Phonics and Decoding:** Alphabetic Principle, Grapheme/Phoneme Associations
- **Sight Recognition:** Orthographic Mapping, Morphemes, Automaticity

Differentiated Linguistic Scaffolds

Differentiated Linguistic Scaffolds

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY LEVEL →

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION
ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT
WORD RECOGNITION

TIME →



Linda Cavazos and Claude Goldenberg 2026
Graphic design by Terrence Grimm and AFT staff
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RICH CLASSROOM DIALOGUE AND READING

QUALITY OF TALK

Extend and question ideas ideas instead of stopping at at the first answer.

Howe et al. (2019)

TALK ABOUT TEXTS

Connect discussion to the the language and ideas in in the text.

Proctor et al. (2020)

STUDENTS' IDEAS

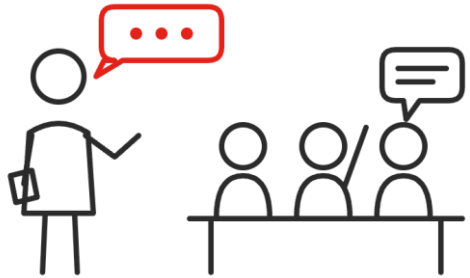
Make space for students to initiate, connect and infer.

Christ et al. (2025)

HOME LANGUAGES

Draw on the languages and knowledge students bring.

Proctor et al. (2021)



HANDING OVER THE CONTROL

01 NOT STEPPING AWAY

Structured freedom: well-designed structure creates the conditions for student agency.

Manyukhina (2025)

02 STRUCTURE AND AUTONOMY WORK TOGETHER

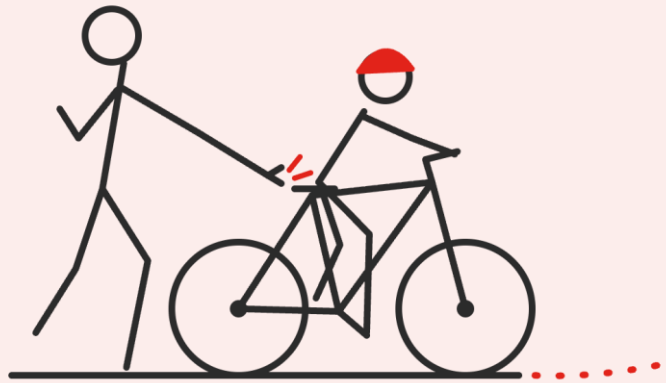
Support for autonomy and classroom structure reinforce each other.

Patzak & Zhang (2025)

03 A CAPACITY WE DEVELOP

Students can set goals and reflect, but they need teaching and practice.

Ponomariovienė & Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė (2025)



SUPPORT FIRST, THEN LET GO

We choose the text. Students can learn to take charge of how they read it.

WHAT ARE COGNITIVE AND METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES?



COGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES

> *"[They] help readers resolve issues in constructing the meaning of a text."*
>
> Song et al. (2020)

> *"Mental activities selected by the reader to acquire, organize, and elaborate information."*
>
> Andreassen & Bråten (2011)



Strategy	What the reader does
Words and sentences	
Word identification	Recognises written words
Contextual guessing	Uses context to work out a new word
Analysis of syntactic features	Works out how a sentence fits together
Connecting to what we know	
Activating background knowledge	Draws on what they already know
Prediction	Anticipates what comes next
Inference	Works out what is not stated
Elaboration	Links new ideas to known ones
Imagery	Pictures the text in their mind
Organising the whole text	
Main idea	Finds the central point
Paraphrasing / summarising	Restates or condenses key ideas
Retell	Reconstructs events or information
Text structure	Sees how information is organised
Graphic organisers	Maps how ideas relate, visually
Drawing on other languages	
Translation	Uses the first language to understand

Strategies drawn from Song et al. (2020); Carrell (1989); Oxford (1990); Grabe (2004); Peng et al. (2024); (2024); O'Malley & Chamot (1990); Chan et al. (1990).

METACOGNITION: IS IT A NEW CONCEPT?

The word is recent. The ideas go back more than 2,000 years.

(Tarricone, 2011)

384–322 BCE

ARISTOTLE

Memory and recollection recollection

Becoming aware of how our memory works

1596–1650

DESCARTES

Examining our own thoughts

Self-knowledge, introspection and doubt

1859–1952

DEWEY

Reflective thinking

Noticing a problem and searching for a solution

1896–1980

PIAGET

Higher-order reasoning

Checking and correcting our thinking

1896–1934

VYGOTSKY

Language and inner speech

Talk with others becomes talk with ourselves

Not every act of thinking is metacognitive. What matters is our awareness of these processes, and our ability to monitor and regulate them.

CLASSIFICATION OF METACOGNITION

MAIN DIMENSION	TYPE / COMPONENT	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE IN READING	KEY SOURCES
1. METACOGNITIVE KNOWLEDGE	**Declarative knowledge**	Knowing what one knows about cognition and strategies.	“Long sentences are difficult for me.”	Schraw & Dennison (1994)
	Procedural knowledge	Knowing how to use a cognitive strategy.	“I know how to summarise a paragraph.”	Schraw & Dennison (1994)
	Conditional knowledge	Knowing when and why a strategy may help.	“If I lose the meaning, rereading may help.”	Schraw & Dennison (1994)
2. METACOGNITIVE EXPERIENCES	**Metacognitive feelings**	Feeling difficulty, familiarity or confidence during cognition.	“This paragraph feels difficult.”	Efklides (2006)
	Metacognitive judgements	Estimating one’s knowledge, understanding or performance.	“I think I can explain what I read.”	Efklides (2006)
	Task-specific awareness	Noticing particular features of thinking while working.	“I know the words, but not how the ideas connect.”	Efklides (2006)
3. METACOGNITIVE REGULATION	**Planning**	Setting a purpose and selecting an approach.	“I’ll preview the headings before reading.”	Schraw & Dennison (1994)
	Monitoring	Checking understanding as reading progresses.	“Does this still make sense?”	Flavell (1979); Rhodes (2019)
	Control and adjustment	Selecting, changing or adapting a strategy as needed.	“I’ll reread and check the connecting words.”	Rhodes (2019)
	Evaluation	Judging results and whether a strategy helped.	“Did rereading improve my understanding?”	Schraw & Dennison (1994)

METACOGNITIVE REGULATION

Thinking about our thinking: planning, monitoring and evaluating it towards a goal

BEFORE READING

PLANNING

"What am I reading for?"

- Set a purpose
- Preview the text
- Predict the content

DURING READING

MONITORING

"Does this make sense?"

- Check understanding
- Notice when meaning breaks down
- Repair it: reread, slow down, clarify

AFTER READING

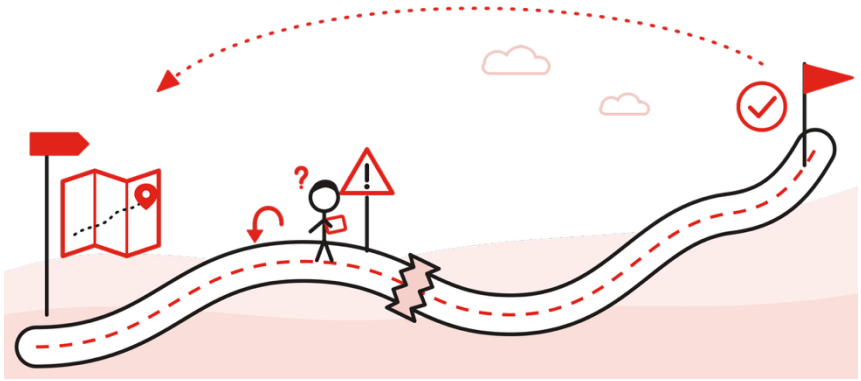
EVALUATING

"Did I understand?"

- Reflect on understanding
- Check predictions
- Notice what helped

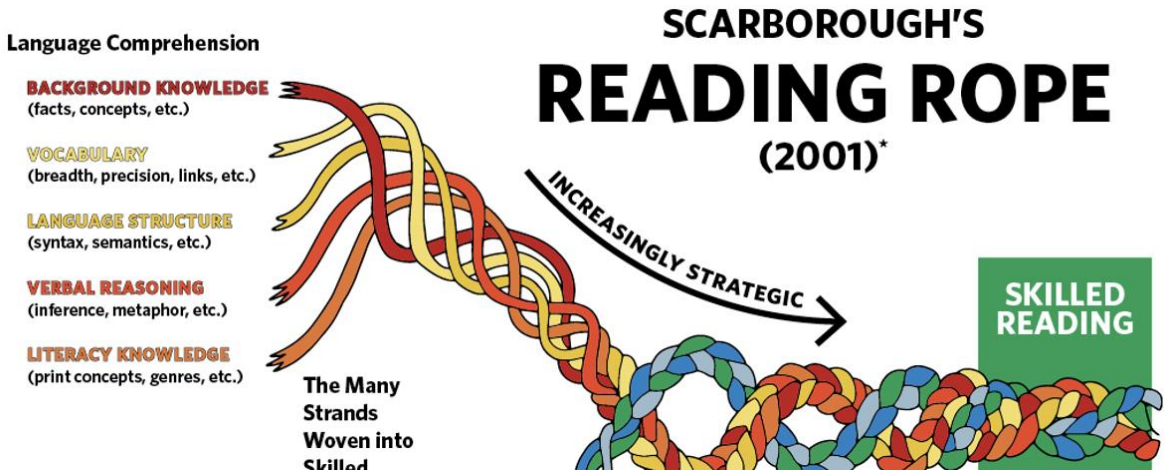
Evaluating shapes the next plan

Conscious and intentional: the reader notices that meaning has broken down broken down and chooses how to repair it.



Cortazzi & Jin (2007); Mokhtari & Reichard (2002).

COGNITIVE VS METACOGNITIVE



COGNITIVE

BUILDING MEANING FROM THE TEXT

"[They] help readers resolve issues in constructing the meaning of a text."

Song et al. (2020)

The reader asks: ***"What does this mean?"***

VS

METACOGNITIVE

MANAGING READING

"Intentional regulatory actions learners employ to control comprehension processes."

Asfaw et al. (2026)

The reader asks: ***"Is this working? What should I do next?"***

SAME MOVE, DIFFERENT THINKING

REREADING	Rereading out of habit	→	*"I've lost track of who is speaking, so I'll go back to the start of the paragraph." paragraph."*
PREDICTION	Making a prediction about what comes next	→	*"That doesn't fit what I predicted. I need to change my idea."*

Cognitive strategies build meaning. Metacognitive strategies decide which to use, when, and whether it worked.

METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES

> *"Intentional regulatory actions learners employ to control comprehension processes."*
>
> Asfaw et al. (2026)

GLOBAL

Setting the stage for reading

- Keeping a reading purpose
- Previewing the text
- Using prior knowledge
- Predicting and checking predictions
- Checking understanding

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Repairing meaning when it breaks down down

- Rereading difficult parts
- Adjusting reading speed
- Pausing to think
- Paying closer attention
- Guessing unknown words

SUPPORT

Tools that sustain reading

- Taking notes
- Using a dictionary
- Asking ourselves questions
- Translating into the first language
- Thinking in both languages

Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) for ESL readers: Mokhtari & Sheorey (2002); categories as described by Mokhtari, Dimitrov & Reichard (2018).

METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES: GLOBAL STRATEGIES

- These are intentional, planned, and goal-oriented techniques that readers use.
- The intention is to set the stage for successful comprehension and keep track of reading.
- These are not reactive "fix-up" moves, but rather proactive strategies that organise and guide reading.

(Mokhtari, Dimitrov & Reichard, 2018; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002).

1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.
2. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.
3. I preview the text to see what it's about before reading it.
4. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.
5. I skim the text first by noting characteristics like length and organization.
6. I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.
7. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.
8. I use typographical aids like boldface and italics to identify key information.
9. I critically analyse and evaluate the information presented in the text.
10. I try to guess what the material is about when I read.
11. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.

METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES: PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGIES

- These are the actions readers take while reading to work through difficulties in text comprehension.
- These are in-the-moment fixes for comprehension breakdowns
- They involve actively working through problems with vocabulary, meaning, or concentration.

(Mokhtari, Dimitrov & Reichard, 2018; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002).

1. I read slowly but carefully to be sure I understand what I'm reading.
2. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.
3. I adjust my reading speed according to what I'm reading.
4. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I'm reading.
5. I stop from time to time and think about what I'm reading.
6. I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.
7. When text becomes difficult, I reread to increase my understanding.
8. I try to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.
9. I try to make connections as I read.

METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES: SUPPORT STRATEGIES

- These are external, resource-based strategies.
- They assist comprehension by adding tools, collaboration, or physical actions to the reading process.
- They supplement mental processes with tangible aids that make it easier to take corrective actions when comprehension fails.

(Mokhtari, Dimitrov & Reichard, 2018; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002).

1. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.
2. When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.
3. I summarize what I read to reflect on important information in the text.
4. I discuss what I read with others to check my understanding.
5. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.
6. I use reference materials such as dictionaries to help me understand what I read.
7. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.
8. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.
9. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.

IS TEACHING METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES IMPACTFUL?



IMPACT OF METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES

STUDIES WITH PRIMARY-AGE ENGLISH LEARNERS

GREECE	**Gains kept at a delayed test**	Manoli et al. (2016) · EFL, ages 11–12
BASQUE COUNTRY	**Gains maintained over two years**	Ruiz de Zarobe & Zenotz (2018) · English as a third language
HONG KONG	**Read better than a comparison group**	Teng (2020) · ESL, Year 5
KUWAIT	**Significant difference between groups**	AlAdwani et al. (2022) · EFL, Year 5
SAUDI ARABIA	**Underachieving readers caught up**	Momdjian & El Chidiac (2024) · ESL, Year 6

REFLECTION ADDS VALUE

Same reading lessons for both groups. Adding reflection on strategies gave a larger, lasting advantage.

Martelletti et al. (2023)

AWARENESS ≠ COMPREHENSION

Strategy use improved, but overall comprehension did not.

Decristan et al. (2024)

Not more strategies, but explicit chances to notice, practise and reflect on how we read.

IMPACT IN SECONDARY CLASSROOMS

STUDIES WITH SECONDARY ENGLISH LEARNERS

SINGAPORE	**Small but significant comprehension gains**	Dabarera et al. (2014) · ESL, Secondary 1
PHILIPPINES	**Bigger gains than controls (+10.45 vs +3.05)**	Gatcho & Hajan (2019) · ESL, Year 11
THAILAND	**Higher scores and more strategic reading**	Chinpakdee & Gu (2024) · EFL, Year 11
ETHIOPIA	**Outperformed the control group**	Wendaferew et al. (2023) · EFL, Year 11
MOROCCO	**Gains in English and in French**	Razkane & Diouny (2024) · English (L3), Year 11

TRANSFER ACROSS LANGUAGES

Training in English also improved reading in French. Some strategies carry across languages, but not all, and not automatically.

Razkane & Diouny (2024)

APPROACHES, NOT SINGLE STRATEGIES

Reciprocal Teaching and strategy-based instruction are broad packages. Gains can’t be pinned on one strategy.

The same message as primary: explicit teaching helps, and students’ languages are a resource.

HOW DO WE TEACH METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES?



PLAN, MONITOR, REFLECT AND TALK

1 PLAN
BEFORE READING

Preview the title, pictures and headings. Set one prediction and one purpose.

THINK
What do I already know about this? Why am I reading it?

SAY
"I think this is about…"
"I predict… because…"

2 MONITOR
DURING READING

Stop at 1–2 points. Fix each ? with a repair move.

THINK
Does this still make sense? Can I picture what is happening?

SAY
✓ **Got it:** *"It says…"*
? Stuck: *"I'm confused about…"*
★ **Key idea:** *"This matters because…"*

3 REFLECT
AFTER READING

Write a short reflection. Beginners can draw or use their first language.

THINK
Where did I get stuck? Did my fix work?

SAY
"I got stuck when… To fix it, I…"
"Next time, I will try… first."

FIX A ? → Reread · Read on · Check the picture · Break up the word · Think in my first language · Ask a friend

TALK
THROUGHOUT

In small groups, each student shares one **?** and how they fixed it.

Share: *"My ? was… I fixed it by…"*

Groups of 4–6 · Mix friendship groups

Open questions: *"How did you work that out?" "What else could you try?"*
Home languages welcome: *"In my language, this word means…"*

Teng (2020) · Proctor et al. (2020)

Every reading lesson, every time: a routine students can expect.

CALLA SEQUENCE

(Khellab et al., 2022; Wendaferew et al., 2023)

1 PREPARE

Find out what students already do when they get stuck.

Teacher: *"What did you do when this part got tricky?"*
Student: *"When I get stuck, I usually…"*

2 MODEL

Name the strategy, say when to use it, then think aloud.

Teacher: *"I'm lost. That's my signal to stop and stop and reread."*
Student: *"I'm confused, so I will…"*

3 PRACTISE

Hand over gradually: whole class, then pairs, then alone.

I do → We do → You do

Partner: *"Where did you stop?"*
Student: *"I stopped here, so I will…"*

4 SELF-EVALUATE

Students judge whether the strategy worked for them.

Teacher: *"Where did you get stuck? Did it help?" help?"*
Student: *"I tried… It helped / didn't help because…"*

5 EXTEND

Use the same strategy on new texts and in other subjects.

Teacher: *"Where could rereading help in this this maths problem?"*
Student: *"I can reread here because…"*

6 ASSESS

Check how students read, not just their answers.

Teacher: *"Show me what you did when you got you got stuck."*
Student: *"First I…, then I…, so now I know…" know…"*

One strategy at a time · Revisit it over several weeks · Adjust support to proficiency

EXAMINING HOW WE INFER

1 MODEL

Show students how we combine textual clues and prior knowledge to make an inference.

2 QUESTION

Ask: “What makes you say so?”

3 REFLECT

Ask: “How did you work that out?”

4 REVISIT

Encourage students to explain their thinking with a new text.

“What makes you say so?”



Student: *“I say so because the text says ___ and I know ___.”*

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH TELL US?

Martelletti et al. (2023)

Adding metacognitive activities to inference instruction improved students' learning, with benefits evident four weeks later.

Metacognition did not replace inference teaching. It strengthened it.

Keep your inference lesson. Add a thinking layer: Teach them to think about how they make inferences.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

1. **Model.** Teacher models how to connect text-to-self, text-to-text, or text-to-world by pausing after reading a portion of the text.
2. **Guide.** Teacher encourages students to do the same as the teacher helps them through prompts.
3. **Share.** Students connect text-to-self, text-to-text, or text-to-world by explaining to their peers or their peers or the whole class.
4. **Practise.** Teacher provides more opportunities for students to practise this strategy at different at different points in the reading and/or with different texts (with the teacher, in groups and groups and individually).

CONNECTING STATEMENTS

This part reminds me of . . .

I felt like . . . (Character) when I . . .

If that happened to me I would . . .

This book reminds me of . . . (Another text) because . . .

. .

I can relate to . . . (Part of text) because one time . . .

Something similar happened to me when . . .

Text-to-self	Text-to-text	Text-to-world
What does this remind me of in my life?	What does this remind me of in another book I' ve read?	What does this remind me of in the real world?
What is this similar to in my life?	How is this text similar to other things I' ve read?	How is this text similar to things that happen in the real world?
How is this different from my life?	How is this different from other books I' ve read?	How is this different from things that happen in the real world?
Has something like this ever happened to me?	Have I read about something like this before?	How did that part relate to the world around me?

Smith (2016)

MAKING CONNECTIONS IN PRACTICE

A RAINY DAY AT THE PARK

It was Saturday morning.

Maria wanted to play at the park. She put on her red jacket and ran outside.

But the sky was grey.

Soon, big raindrops started to fall.

Maria ran to the big tree and stood under it. She could hear the rain hitting the leaves. She could smell the wet grass.

While she waited, she saw two ducks swimming in a puddle. The ducks splashed and quacked happily.

Maria smiled. She thought, “The rain can be fun too.”

TEXT-TO-SELF

Have you ever played in the rain? How did you feel?

TEXT-TO-TEXT

Have you read another story with rain in it? Was it the same or different?

TEXT-TO-WORLD

Where else do you see animals enjoying the rain?

EVALUATION

CLASS STRATEGY WALL

- Create a list of strategies that students have been learning and display and display the list on the wall.
- After a reading session, students get a sticky note to write their name and stick it under the relevant category/categories.
- As a class, you can quickly see which strategies were commonly used, which can lead to a whole class discussion.

- One strategy I used … was _____. It helped me _____.
- When I got stuck on a word or part, I _____.
- A strategy I tried today was _____. I think it was (helpful/not helpful) because _____.
- Next time I read, I will _____ (strategy) so that I can _____.
- My favourite strategy today was _____ because _____.

I looked at the title and pictures to guess what the text might be about before I read.	🙂	😐	😕
If I got confused, I read the hard part again.	🙂	😐	😕
I asked myself questions like ‘ What might happen next?’ while reading.	🙂	😐	😕
When I didn’ t know a word, I tried to figure it out (or asked for help).	🙂	😐	😕
After reading, I thought about or retold what I read to make sure I understood.	🙂	😐	😕

IN SUM ...

- **Model all strategies** – Demonstrate each metacognitive strategy, thinking aloud as you read.
- **Encourage active participation** – Have students "think along" and verbalise examples of using the strategies. using the strategies.
- **Discuss benefits** – Conclude each modelling session with a conversation about how these strategies help readers.
- **Support non-readers** – In small groups, read texts aloud in chunks and use strategy picture cue cards for cue cards for students to identify and discuss strategies used.
- **Match texts to abilities** – For students ready to read, choose texts at their reading level; prefer nonfiction for richer opportunities to practise strategies.
- **Focus on foundation, not mastery** – Early practice aims to establish familiarity with strategies, not perfect use.
- **Create an anchor chart** – List all Metacognitive Thinking Stems as an ongoing reminder.

- **Promote gradual independence** – Help students apply strategies flexibly and self-regulate to solve comprehension problems.
- **Teach transfer of strategies** – Support students in using strategies across both narrative and informational texts.
- **Build monitoring skills** – Enable learners to check comprehension and take steps to fix misunderstandings.

(McGregor, 2007; Ozturk, 2017)

THINKING STEMS

- *I'm thinking . . .*
- *I'm noticing . . .*
- *I'm wondering . . .*
- *I'm picturing . . .*
- *I'm feeling . . .*
- *It reminds me of . . .*
- *I'm figuring out . . .*



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