



Develop the Comprehension Instruction in Upper Primary

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In the last academic year, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau of Macao (DSEJ) announced “The Requirements of Basic Academic Attainments” has been passed into the law through in the Legislative Assembly and consequently would be implemented in this academic year. This document introduces Basic Attainment objectives for each subject area that should be attained at transitional points across the primary curriculum and English language is one of the required subject which is included in this document. In this document, it requires students to master the basic skills of English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing. In key stage two (primary four to six), it highlights the reading and writing skills in this stage. Therefore, developing the comprehension instruction in key stage two can help the students have a better development for reading literacy.

Actually, reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols and communication. This

communication enables the writer to share the information or ideas to the readers. It is a complex interaction between texts and readers. The reading process requires continuous practice development and refinement (Nuttall, 2005). Therefore, the goal of language teachers is to train the students become a fluent reader (Clark, 1995). It means students can read independently, use the appropriate strategies to read the text and get the message from the text. To achieve this goal, comprehension instruction helps students to become aware of text organization, and motivate students to read widely (Neufeld, 2006).

In comprehension instruction, there are two strategies. They are “Getting-Ready-to Read Strategies” and “During-and After-Reading Strategies”. Actually, these two strategies are asked and answered by students themselves.

Before students read the passage, they should ask themselves some points. They are “read with purpose”, “overview the text”,

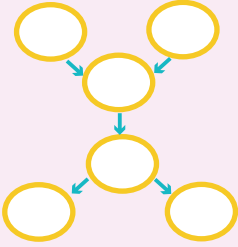
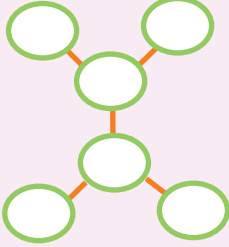


“activate what you already know” and “predict”. Teachers can give them some guided questions to the previous points. The questions can be like “How should my purpose affect the way I read the text?”, “How is the text organized?” or “I think this text is going to be about...” (Neufeld, 2006). This brainstorm gives students a purpose to read a text. This is because those questions can call back their previous knowledge. It can let the students know that reading passage should link with their previous experience or knowledge. Students might not be confused when they read a passage next time. Furthermore, reading a text can get information directly. As for “During- and After-Reading Strategies”, there are some points for teachers to ask the students. They are “consider text organization”, “summarize the text”

“check their understanding” and “use fix-up strategies”. Those questions or tasks should be like “How is the text organized?”, “Express the main ideas in their own words orally or in writing?”, “What about the text is still fuzzy or unclear?” and “examine other resources on the topic” (Neufeld, 2006). Those questions and tasks are good for the teachers to use. It is because they are the basic questions to comprehend a passage. It also can let the students explore more information if they are interested in the particular topic or issue. Teachers should train the students to be independent readers as a goal when they are teaching. The reason is that learning should be internal motivation (Ormrod, 2011). Neufeld (2006) gives a picture about “five common text structures and examples of associated visual

Figure1: Five common text structures and examples of associated visual organizers

Text structure	Explanation	Visual representation
Enumeration	A list of items or ideas specified one after the other	
Time	Lists a series of event in time.	
Compare and contract	Describes or explains similarities and differences between two or more things or events.	

Cause(s) and effect(s)	Explains how event cause other events (effects).	
Description	A characterization of salient features or events intended to create a mental image of something experienced (e.g., a scene, a person, an object, an event).	

organizers” (refer to figure 1) for teachers as a reference to present the text structure in the classroom. Actually, teachers can show some visual organizers in the classroom so that students can see it anytime. It is easy for them to memorise the text structures.

Generally speaking, comprehension instruction gives teachers a new concept to teach comprehension in the classroom. They can try to develop their own way to teach comprehension. It is not only good for teachers, but also for students. The reason is that for teachers, it can develop their teaching professional in their field. For students, it can train the students become effective readers in the future. 🌱

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