# Chapter 10 Activities

Web activity WA10.1

Understanding reciprocal reading to develop comprehension skills

Read the text below. Consider how you might use ‘reciprocal reading’ in a classroom yourself.

In their seminal study of comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities, Palincsar and Brown (1984) showed how reciprocal oral language exchanges between a learner and more experienced other could have demonstrable effects on levels of reading comprehension. Six elements were identified as contributing to comprehension:

* understanding both explicit and implicit purposes of reading;
* accessing relevant background knowledge;
* focusing attention on the major content of the text;
* evaluation of the content of the text for consistency and compatibility with the learner’s prior knowledge;
* self-monitoring of understanding of the text as the reading proceeds;
* drawing and testing a range of inferences, interpretations, predictions and conclusions.

The researchers selected four concrete activities in which to train learners and tutors, which embodied the six elements above: ‘self-directed summarizing (review), questioning, clarifying and predicting’ (p. 121). These activities were embedded in the dialogue between more competent other and learner that took place during the reading of text:

The basic procedure was that an adult teacher, working individually with a seventh-grade poor reader, assigned a segment of the passage to be read and either indicated that it was her turn to be the teacher or assigned the student to teach that segment. The adult teacher and the student then read the assigned segment silently. After reading the text, the teacher (student or adult) for that segment asked a question that a teacher or test might ask on the segment, summarized the content, discussed and clarified any difficulties, and finally made a prediction about future content. All of these activities were embedded in as natural a dialogue as possible, with the teacher and student giving feedback to each other. ...

Gradually, the students became much more capable of assuming their role as dialogue leader and by the end of ten sessions were providing paraphrases of some sophistication.

(pp. 124–125)

Web activity WA10.2

Developing appropriate ‘Three-Level Guides’

Read the description below of the development of a ‘Three-Level Guide’.

How might you develop and use such a guide to support reading comprehension of a group of learners who experience difficulties in reading acquisition?

First choose a relevant text. How would you take account of the reading level and interests of the group?

Next decide on your objectives for the content of your guide. This will inform the development of your statements. These statements should lead the reader to focus on the relevant parts of the text. Your decisions about content will determine how you apply your level statements.

Write the third (applied) level statements first because they influence the development of the statements at the other levels. The third level statements should reflect the main ideas and concepts you would like the learners to explore through the text, and will encourage the learners to think beyond the text to its wider implications.

Next, write your literal statements. These should guide the learners to the information in the text related to the issues explored in the third/applied level statements. The literal statements should focus the learners’ attention on the relevant information in the text. This teaches the students to be selective in their reading and disregard irrelevant information.

Finally, develop your interpretive level statements so that they guide the learners to draw inferences from the information in the text. These statements should focus on the author’s intent behind the words and information selected.

Web activity WA10.3

Effective listening to children’s reading

One common approach to supporting reading acquisition is simply listening to children read.

* From your own experience, what do you think are the most important ingredients in listening to a struggling reader read for a teacher trying to maintain motivation and engagement with the text?
* Why do you think this?

In light of observations of teachers identified as effective in supporting reading acquisition of learners who experienced difficulties Wragg et al. (1998, pp. 264–265) highlighted six ‘ingredients’ needed for successful practice in this area:

* Orderliness – disruptive behaviour by other pupils can be a powerful distractor.
* Focus – a strong focus on reading as the major activity of the moment, so that maths or other problems do not take the teacher away from the principal domain.
* Independence – children reading alone need to be able to make their own decisions, so they are not too dependent on the teacher; equally, those reading with the teacher need independence, so they can guess intelligently at unfamiliar words.
* Priority – the child being heard needs to have top priority, except in emergencies.
* Importance – reading must be made important, so that interruptions are frowned upon.
* Worthwhileness – the chapter needs to be engaging and worth talking about.

 (Wragg et al., 1998, p. 152)

How useful do you think this list would be for trainee teachers supporting struggling readers – and others?

Web activity WA10.4

Reflecting on the usefulness of ‘Cued spelling’

‘Cued spelling’ (Topping, 2001) uses words the student him/herself wishes to spell and relies on principles of praise, modelling, and swift support procedures, ‘in the hope of eliminating the fear of failure’ (Topping, 1996, p 50).

Read the text below and consider whether and how you might use ‘Cued spelling’ to support the spelling acquisition of learners who experience difficulties.

How might you put this into practice?

How would you cope with the issue of the difficulty level of words that learners might choose to learn?

The basic structure of the technique comprises ten steps:

* (Step 1) The learner chooses words of high interest to him/herself, irrespective of difficulty level. Tutor and learner check the spelling of the word and put a master version in a ‘Cued Spelling Diary’ (Step 2). The pair read the word out loud together, then the learner reads the word aloud alone (Step 3).
* (Step 4) The learner chooses cues (reminders) to enable him or her to remember the written structure of the word. These may be sounds, letter names, syllables or other fragments of words, or wholly personal mnemonic (memory) devices.
* (Step 5) The pair repeats the cues aloud simultaneously.
* (Step 6) The learner then repeats the cues aloud while the tutor models how to write the word down while it is ‘dictated’.
* Roles then reverse, the tutor saying the cues aloud while the learner writes the word down (Step 7).
* (Step 8) The learner repeats the cues and writes the word simultaneously.
* At Step 9, the learner is required to write the word as fast as possible and may decide for him/herself whether to recite the cues out loud.
* Finally (Step 10), the learner reads the word out loud.

Web activity WA10.5

Reflecting on way to use ‘Paired writing’

 ‘Paired writing’ is a framework for a pair working together to generate … a piece of writing – for any purpose they wish. … Paired writing usually operates with a more able writer (the Helper) and a less able one (the Writer), but can work with a pair of equal ability so long as they edit carefully and use a dictionary to check spellings. …

The structure of the system consists of six Steps, ten Questions (for Ideas), five Stages (for Drafting) and four Levels (for Editing). Further details will be found in Topping (1995).

Step 1 is Ideas Generation. The Helper stimulates ideas by using given Questions and inventing other relevant ones, making one-word notes on the Writer’s responses.

Step 2 is Drafting. The notes then form the basis for Drafting, which ignores spelling and punctuation. Lined paper and double spaced writing is recommended. The Writer dictates the text and scribing occurs in whichever of the five Stages of Support has been chosen by the pair. If there is a hitch, the Helper gives more support.

In Step 3 the pair look at the text together while the Helper reads the Draft out loud with expression. The Writer then reads the text out loud, with the Helper correcting any reading errors.

Step 4 is Editing. First the Writer considers where s/he thinks improvements are necessary, marking this with a coloured pen, pencil or highlighter. The most important improvement is where the meaning is unclear. The second most important is to do with the organization of ideas or the order in which meanings are presented. The next consideration is whether spellings are correct and the last whether punctuation is helpful and correct. The Helper praises the Writer then marks points the Writer has ‘missed’. The pair then discuss – and agree improvements.

In Step 5 the Writer (usually) copies out a ‘neat’ or ‘best’ version. Sometimes the Helper may write or type or word-process it, however. Making the final copy is the least important step.

Step 6 is Evaluate. The pair should self-assess their own best copy, but peer assessment by another pair is very useful. The criteria in the Edit levels provide a checklist for this