

Assessment Literacy in Practice: Assessing Reading

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Assessment requirements

- Quality and 'PRICE'
 - Planning-Reflection-Improvement-Cooperation-Evidence
- In classroom contexts, we need assessments that can provide insights into
 - how our students access a text
 - sources of difficulty
 - strategies for improving comprehension
- The tools at our disposal
 - text selection
 - task design
 - questioning techniques

Aspects of reading comprehension

How do they read?

Cognitive aspects

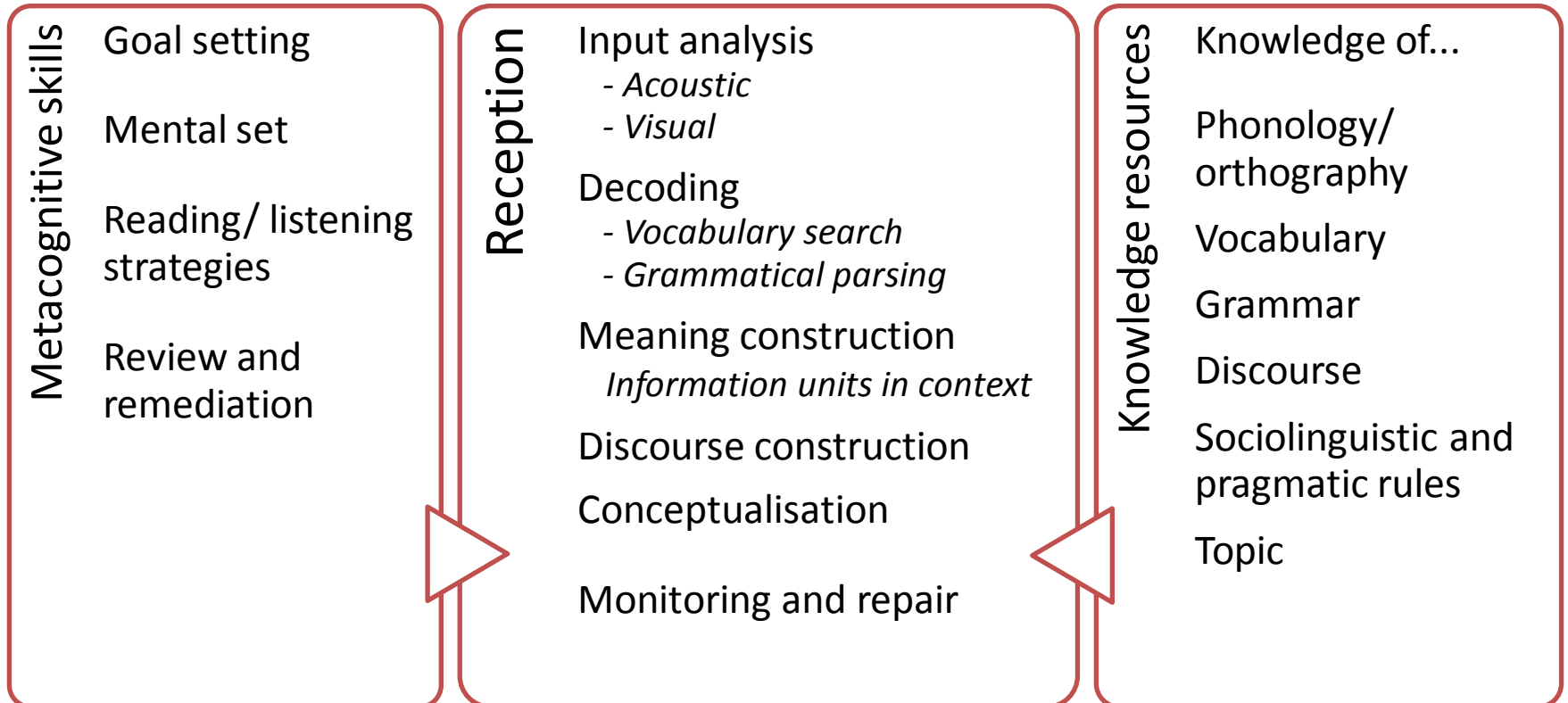
Why do they read?

Social aspects

What do they read?

How do they read?

Cognitive processing in receptive language use



What do they read? Features of written language

A (new) technology

A set of socially contextualised practices

Highly variable both in form and purpose

In comparison with speech, more...

Permanent

Complex

Planned

Formal

Distant

Lexically dense

Orthographic

advertisements; almanacs; biographies; blogs; brochures; case notes; catalogues; classical and contemporary literary works; columns; comics; correspondence; diaries; dictionaries; dissertations; editorials; e-mails; encyclopaedias; essays; experimental avant-garde prose; factual publications; features; flight information; flyers; forms; formulas; general legal documents; general reports and technical material in professional fields; graphic displays; histories; instruction manuals; instructional texts; job appraisals; journals; labels; ledgers; legal documents; listings; log sheets; lyrics; magazines; manifestos; menus; minutes; newspaper articles; notes; novels; parodies; phone directories; plays; poems; policy statements; printed regulations; professional literature; programmes; publicity material; recipes; records; reports; reviews; romances; scientific texts; serious newspapers; short stories; signs; specialised articles; specifications; speeches; statements; subtitles; terms and conditions; text books; tickets; tweets;

What do they read? Text types

Why? Purposes for reading

Enright et al. 2000

Familiar content:

Reading to find information: search reading, skimming, scanning

Reading for basic comprehension: of main points in a text

Unfamiliar content

Reading to learn incorporates levels above.

“Constructing an organised representation of the text including main points and supporting detail; an integrated understanding of how supporting ideas and factual details of the text form a coherent whole... requires an understanding of cause and effect relationships, comparisons and contrasts, classification relationships, and persuasive intent”

Reading to integrate information across multiple texts

implicates all above reading purposes, but need is to integrate information across texts - greatest demands on processing

Assessments and the 'real world'

In a communicative framework assessment tasks should...

- **be appropriate to the target language use domain**
- **reflect real-world processing**
- **cover the range of purposes for reading**
- **address relevant contributory skills & strategies**

How do they read? Reading processes

Visual input

Our perceptual span is roughly 15 letters in extent. Readers collect information from three zones during the span of a fixation (typically 250 ms). Word recognition takes place closest to the fixation point in a zone that usually includes both the word being fixated and smaller function words directly to its right.

Recognition problems for readers of English

- Grapheme-morpheme correspondence
 - Arabic, Cyrillic etc. scripts vs Latin
 - Opacity of English spelling - esp. of vowels
 - wart/ fort/ taught/ ought; cough/ dough/rough/plough
- Options for diagnosing and improving word recognition
 - word recognition games
 - phonics training
 - extensive reading practice with graded readers
 - speed reading practice under real time pressure

A test of Reading

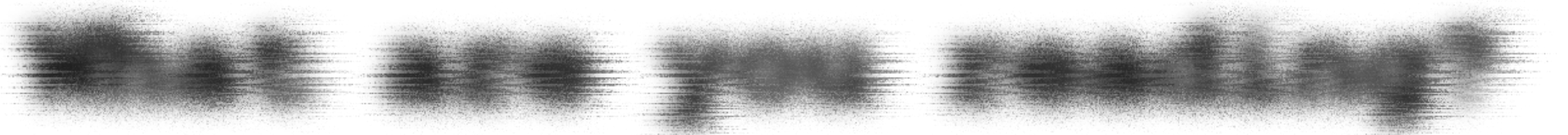
Based on an idea by Beau Lotto


You can read this.

C■n y■u r■d t■s?

Yo _ ar _ no _ read ___ th ___ .

_ s ___ is _ ne ___ der _ o ___ ad?



Ro  **ne**

Vocabulary

- Word frequency
- Polysemy and metaphor
- Referencing and substitution
- Morphosyntactic regularity
- Multi-word expressions

Resources

- The compleat lexical tutor
 - www.lextutor.ca
- The English vocabulary profile
 - www.englishprofile.org

Syntax and vocabulary for readers of English

- Synthetic vs. Analytic
 - Auxilliary verbs and question formation
 - Temporality, tense and aspect
 - Modality
- Articles
- Preposition use
- Phrasal verbs
- etc. etc. etc.

Text structure

Abstract structural patterning of ideas. Common patterns:

- Narrative sequence
- Description
- Cause - effect
- Situation - problem – solution – evaluation
- Definition
- Classification
- Compare – contrast

Pattern recognition leads to better comprehension and recall – text mapping or Grabe's (2009) 'graphic organisers' can model these patterns for learners

English rhetorical structures

- Pragmatics: different markers of formality and politeness
- Culturally rooted variation in the organisation of textual genres

What they read: Text Characteristics

Text length

Discourse mode

Genre

Rhetorical task

Grammatical resources

Only simple sentences

↔ Many complex sentences

Lexical resources

Common items ↔ Very wide range of vocabulary

Nature of information

Concrete ↔ Abstract

Content knowledge

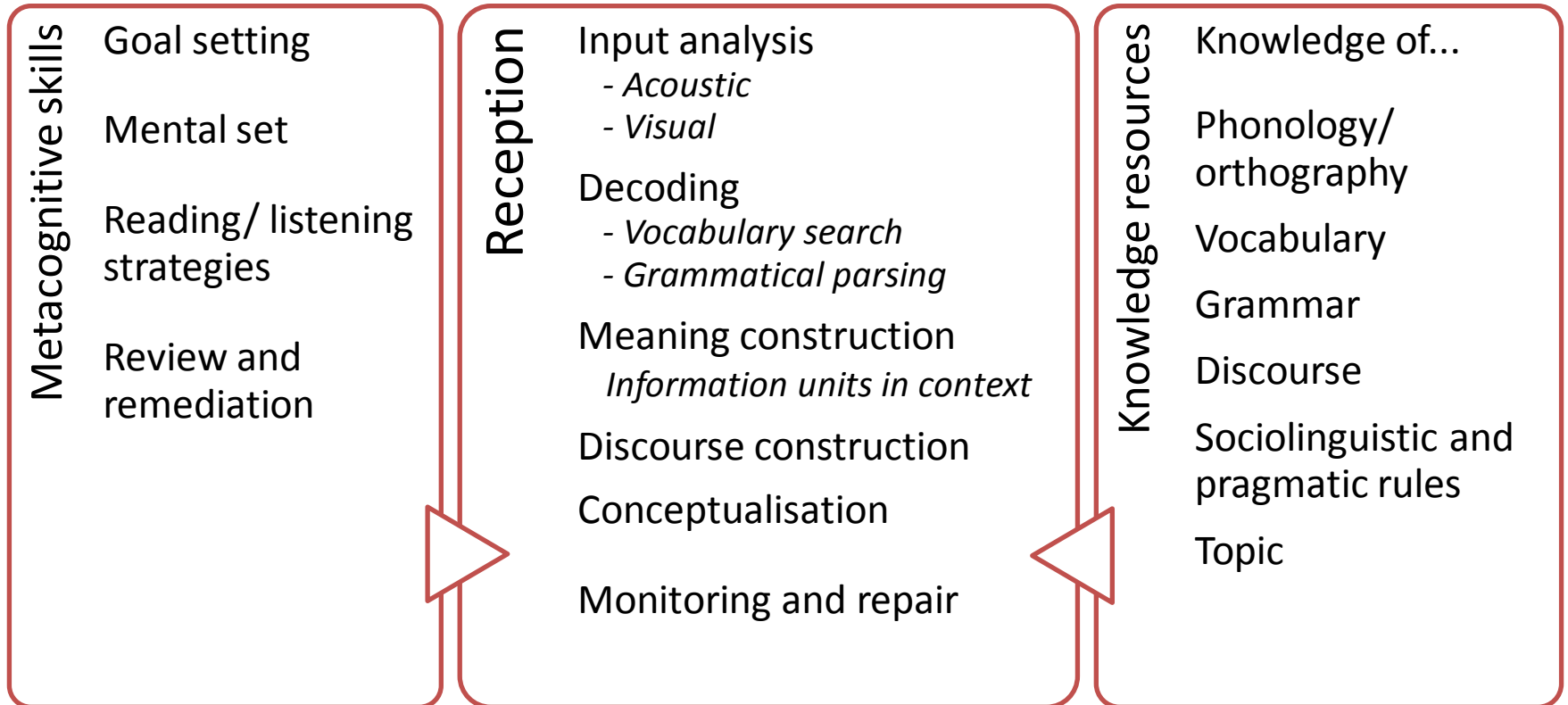
(Enright et al. 2000; Khalifa and Weir 2009)

Resources

- Syntax: The English grammar profile
 - www.englishprofile.org
- Cohesion: Coh-matrix
 - Cohmetrix.com
- Functional exponents: The Threshold series
 - <http://www.ealta.eu.org/resources.htm>

How do they read?

Cognitive processing in receptive language use



How? Types of reading

Khalifa and Weir 2007

	Local	Global
Careful	<p>Identifying lexis Understanding syntax</p>	<p>Accurate comprehension of explicitly stated main ideas & supporting details Propositional inferences</p>
Expeditious	<p>Scanning to locate specific points of information</p>	<p>Skimming quickly for discourse topic & main ideas/ structure of text/ relevance to needs Search reading for information relevant to needs</p>

Expeditious and Global

Gain a general idea of what a text is about

- What is the topic of this text?
- Is this a topic I already know about?
- What is the text going to tell me about the topic?
- Which parts of the text should I read in detail?

Expeditious local: scanning questions for narratives

List the names of the main characters

When did... (action happen) ?

How many...?

How much...?

Where did / does (an action occur)?

Where did / does (object) come from?

Where did / does (character) come from?

Who...(action) ?

List 5 characters/ locations/ objects...

What happened just before (action)?

Where did (character) go after (action)?

What was (object) used for?

Where is (object) located?

Who spoke to (character) at (place)?

Who spoke the words (quote)?

Where did (character) keep (object)?

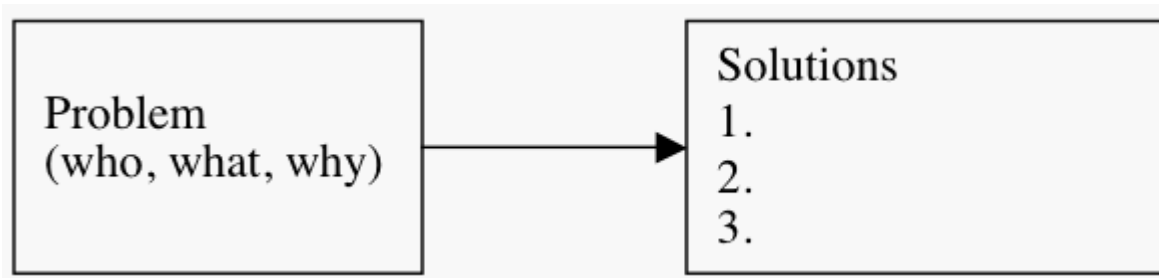
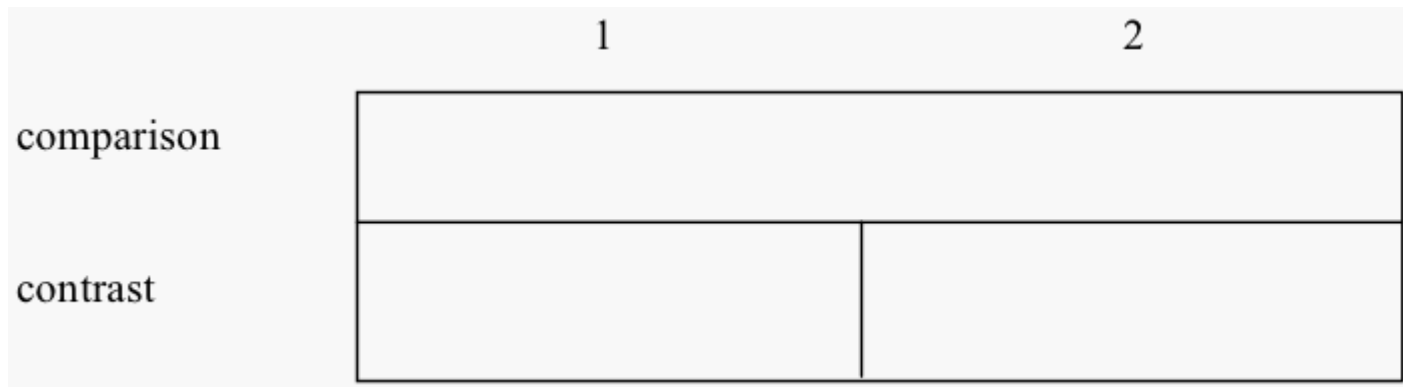
Where in the text does it say (quote)?

List 3 things (character) did at (location)

What character... (did particular action)? or

(was verb)?

Careful and Global



Careful and Global

Summarising

Effective summaries demand full understanding of a text

distinguishing main points from supporting ideas or examples

perceiving relationships between components of an argument

Practice in completing structure diagrams, devising text maps, retellings and written summaries of decreasing length.

Reading processes

- Texts as functional units – implications for how readers read
- Reading for information, reading for basic comprehension, reading to learn, reading to integrate
- Preparing items that reflect realistic processing - text mapping under realistic conditions