Fix-Up Strategies to Repair *CLUNKS*

While it is highly desirable to notice when comprehension is failing, noticing is only useful if a reader knows what to do when a clunk occurs. How do you "fix-up" your comprehension? There are a number of fix-up strategies skilled readers use when they become aware of comprehension problems.

1. **Reread**
   Rereading can include rereading a sentence, a paragraph, or selectively going back to an earlier part of the text to resolve a misunderstanding. Rereading usually needs to be done at a slower rate.

2. **Read Ahead, Then Come Back**
   Sometimes the clunk cannot be resolved by going back. Possibly the author hasn't revealed enough information (intentionally or unintentionally). Skilled readers note the unresolved problem and read ahead to get additional information. They can then go back and see if they solved the problem.

3. **Adjust Reading Rate**
   If the reader notices that the material is easy and familiar and "clicking" along, reading rate can be increased. Conversely, when the reader is noticing comprehension problems, the reading rate needs to be slowed down.

4. **Reflect on, or Revisit the Purpose for Reading**
   When students are reading lengthy passages, they sometimes lose their focus. When this happens, it is helpful to think about the purpose for reading. Was it to find specific information? Was it to answer a specific question?

5. **Access or Re-access Graphic Support**
   Content texts, such as science or social studies usually contain considerable graphic support. This support consists of pictures, drawings, charts, tables, and diagrams. Students often do not use these to aid comprehension. Some students even report ignoring the graphic support to shorten their reading. It is important to model how using graphic support will not only increase comprehension, but may expedite, rather than slow down the reading.

6. **Periodically Check for Understanding**
   Skilled readers are reflective. They pause in their reading to reflect on the on-going development of meaning. They consider what is happening in the story or try to make connections to new content. They also make predictions and confirm previous predictions. Other ways to check for understanding are: self-talk, paraphrasing, summarizing, and retelling.

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7. Use Context

Another fix-up strategy, linked to re-reading, is using context. It involves re-reading some portion of text to re-access clues or information contained in the text. Often students lack versatility in this area. They may only be skilled in one type of context. Teachers can broaden their students' context skills by providing direct instruction with the forms of context.

8. Employ Decoding Skills

At times, a comprehension problem may be caused by an inability to decode a word. Context clues may be insufficient and the word could be crucial to the understanding of the selection. There are many decoding strategies available to students. A brief description follows.

Having an Independent Word Attack System

This is a personal strategy applied when a reader comes to a difficult word. A basic type involves four steps:

1. Think of a word that makes sense.
2. See if it's correct by looking at the parts of the word.
3. Read back or read ahead for more clues.
4. Get help (human or print).

These steps incorporate the three cueing systems. Steps 1 and 3 relate to context, while step 2 uses decoding skills.

Get Your Mouth Ready

This technique helps students decode words by having them focus on how they would position their mouth, lips, and tongue to say the initial sound of the word. If the word was - **macadamia** - the student would look at the first letter and close their lips to begin making the /m/ sound.

Word Parts

Similar to decoding by analogy, this strategy uses prefixes, root words, and suffixes to decode. If the unknown word was [unmovable], a reader would isolate the root word [move], then look at [un] remembering that -un reverses the meaning of what follows, and then looks at the suffix [able].

Decoding by Analogy

Decoding by analogy is related to the second step above, "look for a part you know." It is a decoding method that uses knowledge of known words or word parts to decode unknown words. For example, if the unknown word is [industry], the reader should look at the word for familiar chunks. The student may see the [in] and the [dust]. If the sounds are blended, they will have two-thirds of the word right. If they look at the last part and say /tri/ for [try], the combined word /in-dus/tri won't be quite right to them. What if they knew [country], they could use the sound of [try] in country /tre/ and now they may be able to recognize the word correctly.

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Sound/Symbol Matching

Students look at each letter and think of the sound that letter would make. If the word was - catastrophe - the student would attempt to assign a sound for each letter. This technique, while useful, is limited by words that do not have a one-to-one correspondence between symbol and sound.

Teacher Tips

The strategies outlined above are best learned when the teacher provides sufficient modeling, followed by guided, then independent practice. The strategies do not work equally well in all situations and with all words. The key is to transfer as many strategies as possible to the students and demonstrate under which circumstances a particular strategy works best.

A one page listing of the Fix-up Strategies Flyer is available. This sheet can be used as reminders to students about the fix-up strategies you have taught.

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