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TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS THROUGH INTERVENTION

E. Stranovská, estranovska@ukf.sk,

A. Ficzeré, aniko.ficzeré@ukf.sk,

E. Szabó, erzsebet.szabo@ukf.sk

Constantine the Philosopher University, Nitra, Slovakia

Teaching reading comprehension in a foreign language at secondary school is based on the stimulation of cognitive processes in the first stages of working with a foreign language text, which requires mainly the effort of simpler cognitive processes such as attention, memory and perception. At secondary school, the comprehension of a foreign language text acquires a new dimension; the student strives to understand both implicit and explicit information from the text and to make inferences about the text. Many times students are motivated to read, they read various texts, but they cannot respond to questions, which is also confirmed by testing. This means that the targeted reading and working with the text do not always develop comprehension. For this reason, we consider the practice and development of text comprehension through intervention to be extremely important. The article focuses on the specifics of foreign language reading and the intervention of reading comprehension in German, using intervention program as a tool for effective and complex development of reading comprehension. The criteria for compiling an intervention program are analyzed. The structure of the program, the plan of its experimental verification are worked out. We present an example of one intervention unit (methodical sheet) with the focus on stimulating the cognitive process of divergent thinking.

Keywords: reading comprehension, foreign language, pedagogical intervention, intervention program, secondary school, divergent thinking.

Introduction

Reading comprehension is one of the basic components of communication competence, which plays an irreplaceable role in obtaining knowledge, but also in acquiring a variety of information and professional skills. Reading literacy also plays an important role in comparative studies such as the OECD PISA and IEA PIRLS. Nevertheless, both international and national studies have shown that current students read significantly less than in previous decades and the quality of reading comprehension skill is declining [16]. Reading comprehension has an extremely complex character, which is reflected in the transformational experience influencing the thinking and perception of the individual. The most modern reading models therefore represent text comprehension as an interaction between the text and the reader [11, 12, 14, 18 and others]. While working with the text, not only cognitive and metacognitive processes are involved, but also phe-

nomena at the affective and social level [9]. Reading in a foreign language brings into the process of comprehension other elements of ambiguity and uncertainty that the reader must face. This is not only unknown vocabulary, but also the need for sufficient socio-cultural knowledge and skills in the field of stylistic conventions of writing in the target language [3, 10, 15]. To overcome these barriers, it is necessary to develop the divergent and creative thinking of the reader. By stimulating the mentioned processes and phenomena, we have the opportunity to develop to a greater extent comprehension, perception of the text and thinking about it, which can be achieved by intervention, respectively an intervention program.

We also dealt with the issue of developing reading comprehension in accordance with the latest scientific findings in the projects APVV-17-0071 “Support for reading literacy in the mother tongue and foreign language” and

VEGA 1/0062/19. In the scientific research work, the team of researchers examined the work of predictors in the process of reading comprehension, on the basis of this research, an intervention program of reading comprehension was developed and subsequently this program will be verified. In our article, we describe the intervention program as a tool for effective and complex development of reading comprehension. In the application part, we present an example of an intervention unit focusing on the predictor of divergent thinking, which is an important prerequisite for a deeper and more thorough interpretation of the text.

Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension models can help us to understand the various skills and processes that are part of working with the text. During the construction of the intervention program, we relied on the complex construction-integration and interactive models of text comprehension. In terms of these models, we can divide the processes of comprehension into two phases: micro-processes, meaning local comprehension, from word to word, from sentence to sentence, focusing on details and macroprocesses, which mean global comprehension, when the recipient creates the so called information core in their brain [4, 11]. Lutjeharms [14] proposes the model of interactivity, which is described by a cyclical character. The reader activates his previous knowledge, creates expectations, while expectations depend on the information contained in the text.

Although the above mentioned cognitive processes are generally valid for reading activity, the comprehension of a foreign language text has many more obstacles than reading in the mother tongue. The specifics of foreign language reading are manifested at the level of both lower and higher cognitive functions [2, 3, 15]. While pedagogical practice often emphasizes the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar rules, researchers also point out the importance of stylistic knowledge about the norms of standard text construction, which is necessary to correctly predict the content of the text based on its structure. The cultural assumptions and knowledge are another factor that affects text comprehension. The authors of the texts usually assume this cultural knowledge on the part of the reader, so they remain unspoken in the text. Therefore, the proper functioning of inferences and anticipations requires the skill to see the deeper meaning and connections behind the individual words. We consider

the higher cognitive functions, such as inferential, creative and divergent thinking to be an essential prerequisite for the interpretation of foreign language text.

Predictor of divergent thinking

Divergent thinking is one of the most important components of creativity [1]. We apply it especially in situations and tasks when there is no single right solution, respectively the right solution is not predetermined in the task, the goal is to create as many alternative answers as possible. People with the developed ability of divergent thinking are characterized by the ability to look at a given problem from several perspectives, to create new and unusual solutions, to cross accepted and known boundaries of knowledge.

In connection with education in mother tongue and foreign language, we can state that divergent thinking is closely connected with the language, respectively it can be manifested in the use of language and in the domain of verballity. People with strong divergent thinking have a more loosely arranged vocabulary (mental lexicon) with a large number of connections that allow the production of large numbers of associations [13]. In complex tasks that require reference and inferential thinking, respectively producing multiple alternative responses, students with advanced divergent thinking give better performances than their classmates with dominant convergent thinking [5]. Thus, in the process of text comprehension, the individual characteristics of the students may manifest, they focus on different characteristics and layers of the text, which may lead to different interpretation of the meaning of the text. At the same time, we can assume that by developing divergent strategies in reading and comprehension we can achieve a deeper and more accurate interpretation of the text being read.

The importance of intervention in learning reading comprehension

The intervention program represents a conscious and deliberate application of psychological methods and interpersonal attitudes, in order to help participants modify their behaviour, cognitive abilities, emotions and other characteristics or processes in accordance with the objectives of the program. The intervention programs are based on the theory of social learning and group forms of work and they work with a small social group [17, 20]. In the field of education, the intervention programs in a broader sense represent a modern approach to education, strengthening the humanistic perspective of education. Their strength

also consists of experiencing authentic emotions in processing the experience. The principle of learning consists of personal experience and its reflection. The intervention program can also be called a variant of experiential and self-regulatory forms of learning. In addition to interpersonal learning, we also develop individual work, which is very important in processing information and emotions.

The essence of the reading comprehension intervention program is the development of comprehension, the cognitive processes (from the simplest to the most complex, i.e. from attention to critical thinking), the development and support of motivation to work with the text, the motivation for foreign language reading, the development of the affective level by working with the activities before, during and after reading the text, respectively the student's experience with text working through various techniques and activities [7, 19]. It is an eclectic connection of a wide range of methods and their elements, which support not only the development of reading comprehension, but also personal and social characteristics. The intervention in our program is reflected in two simultaneous working procedures, in working with the text and in the development of the predictor (of the cognitive and metacognitive process). In each intervention unit, one or two related predictors are developed in the way that we concentrate on the cognitive process through intentional activities and procedures. Working with the text is often confused with working with test tasks, which does not teach the students to work with the text, respectively we do not develop comprehension, but we test comprehension, i.e. whether the student has understood the text.

The intervention in learning and teaching a foreign language is a challenge and creates different educational situations for students than which they have been accustomed to so far. In this sense, learning emphasizes the learning process itself. As our intervention program was designed to be realized in the school environment, embedded in a normal school day, we consider the appropriate student training to be extremely important.

Application part

In this part, we analyze the application of the intervention program into the teaching process, respectively we focus on the use of the pedagogical intervention within the educational process of reading comprehension in German. We also define the goal of the intervention program of

reading comprehension, for which purpose we have constructed it, the realization of the program, the methodological analysis of the intervention program and a concrete example of one intervention unit in the form of a methodological sheet.

Aim and purpose of the application

The aim of the application is to describe the creation and the methodical analysis of the intervention program of reading comprehension for German, as well as to construct an example of one intervention unit in order to simulate divergent thinking.

We have constructed the intervention program of reading comprehension for German with the intention of helping teachers in preparing the students to understand the text and to work with it in German, in developing the student's reading skills, such as understanding the main idea of the text, searching for specific information, deducing the meaning of implicit information in the text, evaluation of the text, etc. We pay considerable attention to metacognitive processes: knowledge of the limits in the process of understanding the German text, awareness of its strategy of working with the text, identification of problems that require solution, creation of plans and strategies, evaluation and self-reflection.

Realization of the application of the intervention program

The intervention program of reading comprehension for German will be realized with secondary school students who are compulsorily learning a foreign language (second foreign language), in our case German, at level A2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The program will be realized at grammar schools and secondary vocational schools throughout the Slovak Republic.

Methodical analysis of the intervention program of reading comprehension for German

By constructing the intervention program of reading comprehension for German we sought to ensure the universality of the program for secondary schools at language level A2 and to comply with the following criteria:

- 1) taking into account the performance and content standards of the given language level when selecting texts and constructing activities,
- 2) taking into account the genders (the texts are not intended only for boys or only for girls, they focus on both sexes),
- 3) taking into account the developmental specifics of the students' group (17–19 years),

4) taking into account the field of study (an effort was made to select texts for the widest possible sample of grammar school and secondary vocational school student),

5) taking into account the pragmatic level in texts and activities before, during and after reading the text (use of vocabulary and grammatical structures from the texts, interests and hobbies of the students).

The program contains 10 intervention units (lessons), in which cognitive processes are continuously developed, as well as working with the text. The duration of one intervention unit is 45 minutes.

The program works with different types of texts:

1) linear texts: texts with a complete continuous structure and with continuity of text units. These are factual texts (ordinary, professional, administrative, journalistic, user public or personal) and narrative texts (narration, examples from literature for young people),

2) non-linear texts: texts with discontinuous structure and various graphic elements (diagrams, graphs, tables, overviews, orientation in the timetable, etc.).

In the intervention program, we distinguish three stages of reading, the stage before, during and after reading the text. Each phase is specific and includes different strategies and activities. Javorčíková et al. [8] divide activities when working with the text into warm-up and pre-text tasks – task while reading – tasks after reading. In the intervention program, we therefore work together with four stages, which are warm-up and motivational, pre-textual, while reading and after reading. The aim of this stage is primarily to prepare students to work with the text, on the topic of the text and to provide language preparation before reading the text. The pre-reading phase also activates students' prior knowledge, helping them to more easily understand the meaning of the text. Harmer [6] emphasizes the importance of the pre-reading phase in the class, because even in this phase it is possible to work with students' metacognitive skills, i.e. students can predict what the text will be about. The main aim of the phase while reading the text is to understand the author's intention, to understand the text structure. In addition to clarifying parts of the text, forecasting also plays an important role here, i. e. deducing partial conclusions about the next section of the text that follows their verification in the next reading, by which the student concentrates on the intended content. Activities after

reading the text should give students the opportunity to think about the meaning of the texts and evaluate them. Post-reading tasks are not directly related to the text, but they are based on it. The main aim of this phase is to reflect on what has been read and to relate the text to students' knowledge, interests or views [7].

The intervention program consists of three parts:

1) the introductory stage: warming up the group (warm-up and motivational activities),

2) the main stage: productivity of the group (working with the text, assignments while reading, activities after reading, the information part is combined with the experimental part),

3) the final stage: dissolving the group (finishing the topics, evaluating the previous progress, closing the emotional topics in the texts, relaxing, etc.).

At the beginning of the program, there may not always occur both a warm-up and a motivational activity. The program can be introduced either with a warm-up or with a motivational activity. However, we recommend working with warm-up activities, which are not always directly related to the topic of the text (they often give the impression that they are detached from the context), but subconsciously they support the development of the specific predictor (of the cognitive and metacognitive process), link the work of language and cognitive processes, activate the affective level of the students by breaking down fears of the foreign language and naturally directing them to work with the text or topic.

The main part of the program consists of pre-reading, assignment while reading and post-reading activities, which also focus on developing the specific predictor in the given intervention unit. The aim of this part is to link the work with the text together with the development of comprehension at a certain level, the level is developing in a spiral towards more complex processes. The rate of activities and assignments is not the same in every intervention unit. In some topics we work more with assignments while reading, in others to a greater extent with activities after reading, which means that in one unit two assignments occur while reading, one activity before reading and one activity after reading. It depends on the character of the intervention, what we want to focus on in the unit. Each activity contains a description as well as a bilingual instruction (in German and Slovak) that the teacher speaks.

The final part of the intervention program

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includes mainly techniques inducing relaxation (relaxation techniques), activities aimed at ending the topic, closing emotional topics (music and reading a foreign language text such as a poem, a short story, etc., or free description of the nature, images, storytelling, etc.). The aim of this part is reflection and relaxation of the students in cognitive, emotional and social areas with which the student works intensively throughout the whole intervention unit. For this reason, we recommend involving a short ending to the whole event in class.

The intervention program is designed so that first the methodological sheet for the teacher is given (Table 1), in which all activities are described, including instructions for the teacher about the order which the particular activities should follow. Some activities in the methodological sheet also contain suggestions for students who are more proficient in the language or for

students who are less fluent in the language. It depends on the group of students that the teacher teaches according to which the teacher can decide which activity to choose. The methodological sheet is structured in a table for the sake of clarity of the particular activities. It also includes the proposed duration of the particular activities, which does not have to be followed in every group of the students according to the plan. For this reason, the teacher can adapt the activity to their group (either they can shorten the activity or lengthen it, etc.). The methodological sheet is followed by an appendix to the topic of the methodological sheet, which is used for copying (only if the activity requires it). The appendix is followed by a worksheet. We do not list the appendix and the text in this text in terms of scope. These parts can be found by the authors of the article.

Table 1

Methodological sheet of the intervention unit for the development of reading comprehension

<p>Focus Duration Topic of the text Title of the text Type of the text Material Procedure Warm-up activity Objective: Social form: Tools/Aids: Duration: Instruction:</p>	<p>Divergent thinking 45 min Hobbies Papierhelden Literary text Text, worksheet, box, cards, piece of paper</p> <p>A. Introduction GAME WITH WORDS – WORTSPIEL to develop verbal creativity frontal work of the student under the guidance of the teacher word cards 7 min The teacher prepares cards with various words (they should be familiar to the students) and puts them in a small box (Appendix B to the topic no. 9). Each student draws two cards from the box, after that each of them has to create a sentence that contains both words. <i>Take two cards out of the box and create a sentence with the words that appear on those cards.</i> <i>Nehmen Sie zwei Kärtchen aus der Schachtel und bilden Sie einen Satz mit den Wörtern, die sich auf diesen Kärtchen befinden.</i></p> <p>B. Main part WHAT IS THE STORY ABOUT? – WORUM GEHT ES IM TEXT? ability to form hypothesis based on associations, to develop creativity of the students, to create alternative solutions, to use language means the students work in pairs text, worksheet 8 min The teacher tells the students to work in pairs and think about what the story may be about according to the given keywords (origami, two boys, paper, fight, Judo, birthday) (Worksheet no. 9). The students use the phrases in the worksheet. <i>Arbeiten Sie zu zweit und überlegen Sie darüber, worum es in der Geschichte aufgrund der angegebenen Wörter geht. Was glauben Sie? Verwenden Sie dabei die Redemittel, die sich auf dem Arbeitsblatt befinden.</i></p>
<p>Activity before reading Objective:</p>	<p>Social form: Tools/Aids: Duration: Instruction:</p>

Table 1 (end)

<p>Assignment while reading the text</p> <p>Objective:</p> <p>Social form:</p> <p>Tools/Aids:</p> <p>Duration:</p> <p>Instruction:</p>	<p>DRESS YOUR STICK FIGURE IN YOUR HEAD– KLEIDE DIE PUPPE IN GEDANKEN</p> <p>to work with the text, to develop divergent thinking and interpretation of the text, to encourage creativity and imagination</p> <p>the students work in groups of four</p> <p>text, worksheet, crayons, pencil, pen</p> <p>20 min.</p> <p>The students read an excerpt of the text “Papierhelden” (Text no. 9). <i>Lesen Sie den Ausschnitt aus dem Text “Papierhelden”.</i></p> <p>The teacher writes the individual characters from the story on the board and assigns them numbers: 1. Father, 2. Robin, 3. Daniel, 4. grandmother. He divides the students into 4 groups and distributes to each group one cut-out stick figure made of paper (worksheet no. 9). The teacher brings a dice and asks the first group to roll the dice. The number on the dice determines which character the group should work with. If the group rolls the number 5 and 6, they can choose. The task of each group is to write and draw information and roles of the characters based on the text, as well as their assumptions, ideas, thoughts about the character. The teacher tells the students examples: “The father is strict.” “Robin makes figures from paper.” “Daniel practices Judo.” “The grandmother prepares dinner.” After that they present their character in front of the class.</p> <p><i>Arbeiten Sie in 4 Gruppen und werfen Sie mit dem Würfel. Aufgrund der Nummer auf dem Würfel soll die Gruppe den Darsteller aus der Geschichte beschreiben und charakterisieren. Die Nummer 5 und 6 bedeuten, dass die Gruppe frei einen Darsteller aus der Geschichte wählen darf. Wenn Sie fertig sind, präsentieren Sie bitte Ihren Darsteller.</i></p>
<p>Activity after reading</p> <p>Objective:</p> <p>Social form:</p> <p>Tools/Aids:</p> <p>Duration:</p> <p>Instruction:</p>	<p>WHO IS ANNA? – WER IST ANNA?</p> <p>to develop creativity, the ability to form hypotheses</p> <p>frontal work of the student under the guidance of the teacher</p> <p>None</p> <p>5 min</p> <p>The teacher tells the students that another person appears in the text – Anna (worksheet no. 9). <i>In der Geschichte erscheint noch eine Person. Wer ist sie?</i></p> <p>The students make assumptions about the role of this character. <i>Was denken Sie, welche Rolle hat Anna in der Geschichte, warum ist sie nicht erwähnt im Text, was konnte mit ihr passieren.</i></p>
<p>Activity after reading</p> <p>Objective:</p> <p>Social form:</p> <p>Tools/Aids:</p> <p>Duration:</p> <p>Instruction:</p>	<p>C. Final part</p> <p>YOUR HOBBIES – IHRE HOBBYS</p> <p>to create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, relaxation</p> <p>the students work in the groups of four</p> <p>piece of paper</p> <p>5 min</p> <p>The teacher tells the students to form groups of four and write 2 hobbies on a piece of paper. The students then exchange these papers in the groups and start to guess who what kind of hobby has. <i>Create small groups and write your hobbies on a piece of paper. Then exchange them in the groups and start to guess in these groups who has which kind of hobby.</i></p> <p><i>Arbeiten Sie in Kleingruppen. Schreiben Sie Ihre Hobbys auf ein Stück Papier, tauschen Sie diese Zettel untereinander aus und erraten Sie, wer welches Hobby hat.</i></p>
<p>Sources</p>	<p>Schwenninger, M. (2014): Papierhelden. Deutsch als Fremdsprache. Lektüren für Jugendliche. A2. Hueber Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, München, Deutschland. ISBN: 978-3-19-80-1672-5</p>

Verification plan of the intervention program

The intervention program will be verified by an experimental method, with two measurements (pre-test and post-test). At first, a pre-test measurement will be realized with a validated reading comprehension research tool. Subsequently, ten intervention units will be realized and after completing this program, a post-test measurement will follow.

The plan of particular intervention units:

Testing (pre-test)

1. Attention and concentration; topic: entertainment / free time + informative/user text – Fernsehprogramm (TV program)

2. Attention, concentration and memory processes; topic: free time activities + user text / factual text; advert – Urlaub (Holidays)

3. Perception and language means; topic: German-speaking countries + popular text – Dinge, die du nurverstehst... (Things that you only understand...)

4. Perception, cognitive structuring and language means; topic: mental health + factual text – Stress (Stress)

5. Perception, cognitive structuring and language means; topic: traveling + factual text – Ferienjob (Holiday job)

6. Inference thinking; topic: study abroad + factual text – Leben international (Life internationally)

7. Inference thinking; topic: ecology + factual text – OU: SupermarktohneVerpackung (Supermarket without packaging)

8. Divergent thinking and tolerance of ambiguity; topic: music and musical genres + factual / literary text – Hip-hop = Rap

9. Divergent thinking and tolerance of ambiguity; topic: life of contemporary youth + literary text – Marion Schwenninger: Papierhelden – Part 1 of the excerpt

10. Critical thinking, reflection and self-reflection; topic: life of contemporary youth + literary text – Marion Schwenninger: Papierhelden – Part 2 of the excerpt

Final lesson: Reflection of the read texts

Testing (post-test)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the reading comprehension intervention program has an interdisciplinary character, linking linguistic, pedagogical and psychological goals, making its content remarkable and applicable on several levels. We tried to contribute to the expansion of knowledge of the me-

thodology in the field of foreign language reading and comprehension in German through intervention, respectively the intervention program of reading comprehension and stimulation of cognitive and metacognitive processes from the lower to higher cognitive processes. In practice, language skills are associated with different ways of acquiring reading as well as language acquisition and they overlap in the real language environment, so in the teaching process we recommend applying the complex approach of developing all skills in addition to developing reading comprehension and at the same time to make provision for the affective and social levels of these processes.

We consider working with reading comprehension intervention and the stimulation of predictors (cognitive and metacognitive processes) to be necessary and currently indispensable, because it connects not only the interaction of language processes with cognitive and metacognitive processes, support at the affective and social level, but mediates various methods of working with the text so that the acquired skill of reading comprehension is applied in personal and professional life.

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ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКАЯ ПОДДЕРЖКА ШКОЛЬНИКОВ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ОБУЧЕНИЯ ПОНИМАНИЮ ТЕКСТА НА ИНОСТРАННОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

Э. Страновска, А. Фицере, Э. Сабо

Университет Константина Философа, г. Нитра, Словакия

Обучение пониманию текста на иностранном языке в средней школе основано на стимуляции таких когнитивных процессов, как внимание, память и восприятие. В средней школе понимание текста на иностранном языке приобретает новое измерение; ученик стремится понять не только явную, но и скрытую информацию текста и сделать выводы. Часто школьников мотивируют читать различные тексты, но они не всегда могут ответить на поставленные вопросы по тексту, что подтверждается и в ходе тестирования. Это означает, что целенаправленное чтение и работа с текстом не всегда развивают понимание.

Поэтому мы считаем, что чрезвычайно важно оказывать педагогическую поддержку в процессе чтения и понимания текста. В связи с этим в статье мы уделяем особое внимание специфике чтения на иностранном языке, в основе которой – педагогическая поддержка понимания прочитанного текста на немецком языке. Педагогическая поддержка используется как инструмент для эффективного и комплексного развития понимания текста. В практической части статьи мы анализируем критерии разработки программы педагогической поддержки, ее структуру, план экспериментальной проверки и представляем пример одного из способов педагогической поддержки (методического листа) с акцентом на стимулирование когнитивных процессов дивергентного мышления.

Ключевые слова: понимание прочитанного текста, иностранный язык, педагогическая поддержка, программа педагогической поддержки, средняя школа, дивергентное мышление.

Страновска Эва, доктор педагогических наук, доцент кафедры германских языков, Университет имени Константина Философа, г. Нитра, Словакия, estranovska@ukf.sk.

Фицере Анико, аспирант кафедры германских языков, Университет имени Константина Философа, г. Нитра, Словакия, aniko.ficzere@ukf.sk.

Сабо Эрзebet, аспирант кафедры германских языков, Университет имени Константина Философа, г. Нитра, Словакия, erzsebet.szabo@ukf.sk.

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