

Using Think-Alouds to Improve Reading Comprehension

Lesson Plan

Estimated Lesson Time: One class period

Overview: Studies have shown that the think-aloud strategy improves comprehension on tests. Through this lesson, the teacher will model the think-aloud strategy for students. Components of the think-alouds will be introduced, as well as type of text interactions. Students will develop the ability to use think-alouds to aid in reading comprehension tasks.

From Theory to Practice

Baumann, J.F., Jones, L.A., & Seifert-Kessell, N. (1993). Using think alouds to enhance children's comprehension monitoring abilities. [*The Reading Teacher*, 47, 184-193.](#)

- The intent behind the think-aloud lessons was to help students develop the ability to monitor their reading comprehension and employ strategies to guide or facilitate understanding.
- Think-alouds require a reader to stop periodically, reflect on how a text is being processed and understood, and relate orally what reading strategies are being employed.

Oster, L. (2001). Using the think-aloud for reading instruction. [*The Reading Teacher*, 55, 64-69.](#)

- The think-aloud is a technique in which students verbalize their thoughts as they read and thus bring into the open the strategies they are using to understand a text.
- This metacognitive awareness (being able to think about one's own thinking) is a crucial component of learning, because it enables learners to assess their level of comprehension and adjust their strategies for greater success.
- Several studies have shown that students who verbalize their reading strategies and thoughts while reading score significantly higher on comprehension tests.

Student Objectives

Students will

- Explore the use of the think-aloud strategy
- Vocalize interactions with texts
- Discuss connections between texts and previously acquired knowledge

- Use various types of responses to interact with texts
- Assess personal level of comprehension

Day 1

Instructional Plan

Before Reading

1. Class discussion: What strategies do good readers use to make meaning of the text?
2. Present the term “think-aloud” to your students. Have them brainstorm what they think it might mean. Ask students to report how it might be applied to reading.
3. Distribute the bookmark and discuss the strategies listed on it.
4. Survey students to determine how often they use active reading strategies.
5. Place your students in groups and distribute the envelopes with the strategies good readers use and their definitions (sentence strips). Ask students to match the strategies and definitions.
6. I Have, You Have: Provide each group with one or two definitions. As the teacher calls out the strategy, the group with the right definition reads it aloud and places it on chart paper in front of the classroom.
7. Discuss what is informational text and what strategies to use when reading an informational passage.

During Reading

1. Students will receive three post it notes. They will label them: BEFORE READING, DURING READING and AFTER READING. As teacher models think aloud, students write down on their post it notes what strategies the reader uses before reading, while reading, and after reading.
2. Place the copy of the passage on the overhead and begin to model the strategy (write down your think-aloud on the transparency).
3. After you are done, have students place their post-it on the appropriate chart paper (BEFORE READING, DURING READING, AFTER READING).
4. Instruct the students to complete the one or two paragraphs on their own. Have them write out the think-aloud.
5. Once they are done, have individual students model their think-aloud for the class.

After Reading

1. Conduct the 3-2-1 activity (3 things you learned today, 2 things you liked about the lesson, 1 question you still have) as the exit slip.

Day 2

Preparation — Type the list of think-aloud responses from the previous lesson and distribute to each student at the beginning of class.

Small group — Place students into groups of three or four. Distribute copies of a poem that is unfamiliar to each group. Direct students to read the poem and use the think-aloud strategy that was presented. Each group should record the types of responses that were used.

Whole group — Have each group report the types of responses that were used. Record these on the chart paper from the previous lesson by placing tally marks next to the strategy. Make comparisons of what responses are used most commonly within the classroom.

Follow-up activity — Discuss the types of responses that are used most often. Ask students what they could do to increase comprehension of a particular text. Explain how students can use the think-aloud technique to assess their comprehension of a text. Ask students what responses they could use to help them read their content area textbooks versus fictional literature.

Extensions

Provide students with different types of texts to further explore and practice using think-alouds. Suggestions include short stories (fiction or nonfiction) and excerpts from content area texts. Students can work in either small groups or independently to read the selected text using the think-aloud strategy.

Student Assessment/Reflections

1. Teacher observations of students' uses of think-aloud strategy.
2. Students' abilities to use various think-aloud responses to assist with comprehension.

Questioning

Predicting

Clarifying

Making Connections

Re-reading

Visualizing

Summarizing

Commenting

When you ask questions about what you don't know and try to find the answers.

When you use clues to make guesses about what you are reading.

When you stop reading because you get confused and try to make sense of what is confusing you.

When you think about how what you are reading relates to your life, the world around you, or what you have read.

When you give yourself another chance to make sense of what you are reading.

When you create pictures in your mind connected to the words you are reading.

When you take the most important information you have read and put it in your own words.

When you say something about what you are reading.

When you ask questions
about what you don't
know and try to find the
answers.

When you use clues to
make guesses about
what you are reading.

When you stop reading
because you get
confused and try to
make sense of what is
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When you think about how what you are reading relates to your life, the world around you, or what you have read.

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Student Think-Aloud Observation Sheet

Your teacher will be demonstrating a think-aloud. This means that he/she will be demonstrating what good readers do when they read. While watching your teacher demonstrate the thinking-aloud, tally how often you see him/her use the following reading strategies.

Strategy	How often did you see your teacher demonstrate the strategy
Made a prediction	
Asked a question	
Clarified something that was confusing	
Made a comment about something that was read	
Made a connection to something he/she has read, experienced, or read	
Reread because something was confusing or unclear	
Stopped and asked, "Do I understand what I have read?"	
Made mental pictures of what is being read	
Compared what is being read now to what was previously read or learned	

Name _____

Date

Self-Assessment: Think-Aloud Strategies

While I was reading, how much did I use these 'think-aloud' strategies?

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Make a prediction				
Ask a question				
Clarify something				
Make a comment				
Make a connection				
Figure out if I need to reread				
Ask myself if I understand what I've read				
Make mental pictures (visualize)				
Compare what is being learned now to what has been learned previously				

1. Based on the above table, what do I do most often?
2. Why do I think I do that the most?
3. What think aloud strategy do I do the least?
4. The next time I do a think-aloud, which strategy will I try to use more?
5. Think-alouds help me because...

(Adapted from Beers, p. 126)

Think Alouds

<p style="text-align: center;">Good Readers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Activate prior knowledge ❖ Set a purpose for reading ❖ Decode text ❖ Make a personal connection to text ❖ Make predictions ❖ Visualize ❖ Ask questions ❖ Monitor understanding ❖ Summarize ❖ Apply what they learned 	<p style="text-align: center;">Poor Readers Often Do Not</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Draw on background knowledge as they read ❖ Make predictions as they read ❖ Visualize the events of a text as they read ❖ Recognize confusion as they read; ❖ Recognize a text's structure or organization as they read ❖ Identify or recognize a purpose for reading ❖ Monitor their strategy use according to the purpose for reading the text; <p style="text-align: center;">In other words, students do not necessarily think while they are reading</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Think Aloud</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ A strategy to help reader self-monitor ❖ Teachers can help develop metacomprehension ❖ Metacomprehension is when a reader engages in self-monitoring ❖ Five types of reflections: predict, describe, make analogies, verbalize confusion, model strategy 	<p style="text-align: center;">Purpose for a Think Aloud</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Make picture in mind ❖ Stop and reread to clarify ❖ Make connection to story ❖ Ask questions ❖ Look at story structure and genre ❖ Study author's style and word choice ❖ Feel what is happening ❖ Verbalize confusion when other strategies do not work

Informational Text Features

What to look for when reading informational text:

- ▶ Headings and subheadings
- ▶ Captions
- ▶ photographs, pictures, illustrations
- ▶ diagrams
- ▶ charts and graphs
- ▶ bold, highlighted and italicized text
- ▶ parentheses, dashes

Reading for Meaning Nonfiction

What can I do to help myself understand?

Before I Read ...

Scan

- Titles and subtitles
- Boldface words
- Pictures and captions
- Diagrams, charts, and maps

Think

- What do you know?

Question

- What would you like to learn?
- What will you probably learn?

As I Read ...

Self Check

- Ask yourself if you understand.

After I Read ...

Reread

- Reread the confusing parts.

Summarize

- Tell what you learned.

Reading for Meaning Fiction

What can I do to help myself understand?

Before I Read ...

Think

- What do you know?

Predict

- “I think ____ will happen because...”

As I Read ...

Visualize

- “In my mind I see ...”

Confirm

Revise

or

predictions

- Now I think ...”

Question

- I wonder why ...?
- I’m not sure about ...?

Reread

- Reread the confusing parts again.

After I Read ...

Summarize

and

Connect

- “This is what happened...”
- “This reminds me of ...”