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CURRENT ISSUES IN TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION FOR BUSINESS ENGLISH

The paper reflects current issues in reading and studies the peculiarities of reading comprehension, particularly delving deeper into teaching reading strategies and methods in teaching Business English. Reviewing different definitions of reading and various approaches to reading comprehension, new trends, and methodology are represented and reviewed. Some issues and challenges related to decoding the content through reading, acquiring information encoded in the text, and learning are highlighted. Teaching Business English as a second language requires a multifaceted approach, consequently, socio-affective factors such as building motivation, self-perceptions, emotional attitudes toward reading, and interest in specific topics have also been considered.

Keywords: reading comprehension, note taking, teaching strategies, concept mapping

Introduction

Language learning is a process of forming and developing four basic skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. These skills are also called macro skills or core skills and are essential for receiving and producing information. Reading is a basic receptive skill and a fundamental means of knowledge acquisition. Teaching reading is an indispensable part of the educational process and it is of paramount

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importance in implementing relevant methods and strategies in order to meet the needs of language learners. Reading is not a mechanical process of reproducing words, but it is a complex phenomenon that involves content interpretation, evaluation, and analysis. Therefore, reading comprehension has long been a topic of interest for many researchers and educators, since it is both a source of information and an active process of gaining new knowledge. Reading comprehension is of utmost interest while teaching English as a second language, moreover, when it comes to teaching English for special purposes, new problems of interpretation arise. In this respect, background information and learners' motivation should be activated and new teaching strategies should be implemented. Teaching Business English to 1st-year students at the Armenian State University of Economics (ASUE) attempts to formulate fundamental knowledge in Economics; therefore, text interpretation, reproduction, and retention of knowledge through the reading process must be facilitated. For text interpretation and efficient reading comprehension, we have considered different reading strategies and methods that may constitute effective tools for improving reading comprehension.

Literature Review

As mentioned above, the notion of reading has long been discussed and analyzed by different researchers and educators so we can come across various definitions of the concept. According to Neena Dash reading involves two interrelated processes: word recognition when the reader perceives the meaning of the written symbol and the second process which is built upon the first one is comprehension - the ability of making sense of the connected text (Dash M. & Dash N., 2007, p. 42).

Anderson defines reading as a process in which the reader uses his background knowledge and the information of the text to produce meaning. Therefore, the readers skillfully combine information in the text with what they already know (Anderson et al., 1985, p. 8). Afflerbach suggests that a reading strategy can be seen as a "mental tool" that readers can use to assist, monitor, and enhance their comprehension of the text (Afflerbach & Cho, 2009).

According to Grellet reading is a combination of various skills and which are listed in Jonh Munby's Communicative Syllabus Design and are represented as follows: recognizing the script of a language, inferring the meaning and usage of unfamiliar lexical items, understanding explicitly stated information, understanding implicitly stated information in the text, understanding the conceptual meaning, understanding the communicative value of sentences and utterances, distinguishing the

main idea from supporting detail, extracting important points to summarize the text, skimming and scanning to find specifically required information (Grellet, 1981, p. 5).

These skills may serve as a complete guide for academic reading and thus may be applied to improving reading comprehension in any specialty. Although this guide was written in the early 1980s, it is still relevant, and we can find it in Cambridge University Press.

To have a thorough understanding of the complex process of reading, M. J. Adler suggests differentiating four levels of reading: elementary, inspectional analytical, and syntopical. He also highlights the importance of reading goals: reading for information and reading for understanding. Let us reflect on the reading levels suggested by Adler. The initial stage is the elementary level, also known as the rudimentary or basic level. This is the first exposure to reading, where the main objective is to recognize individual words. The reader's initial question is, "What does the sentence say?". So we can see that the primary objective at this level is to understand the explicitly stated information.

The second level of reading is the inspectional level which is characterized by special emphasis on time. The students are allowed a set time to complete an assigned amount of reading. At this level, the aim is to get the most out of the reading material within a relatively short time period. Another name for this level might be skimming or pre-reading. The questions asked at this level are "What is the text about?", "How is the text structured?". At this level absorbing the gist and understanding the main points are emphasized.

The third level is analytical reading. At this advanced level, reading is a multifaceted activity that requires thorough comprehension and has no time constraints. The reader is an active participant in the reading process, a lot of questions addressed to the details of the text are formed and answered while reading. Reaching this level of reading is highly important for university students who should be able to analyze and evaluate the reading material.

The highest level is syntopical reading. This is a complex and systematic reading. Adler also calls this level comparative reading. He suggests reading various books or texts on the same topic and then comparing, contrasting, and analyzing the information. These skills are essential, particularly for researchers and educators, to broaden the scope of their knowledge.

While teaching reading comprehension, we can see that reading comprehension is not a static skill, and students need to continually work to develop in this respect and reach an advanced level. According to Adler, reading is a dynamic process that involves a continuum of levels, where each level builds upon the previous one and is higher than the one before it, thus the highest level encompasses all the skills attained at the earlier levels (Adler & Van Doren, 1972, p. 14).

There are also three levels of understanding in reading comprehension: literal, inferential, and evaluative which are suggested and explained on the online platform for teachers *study.com.*

The literal level is the primary stage of understanding the text. It serves as a foundation for the next levels. The types of information acquired at this level may be the main idea, explicitly stated facts, or sequence of events. This basic knowledge is essential for building advanced comprehension.

The inferential level involves reading between the lines and determining the idea that is not stated explicitly and the reader should draw conclusions himself, generalizing, synthesizing, and analyzing the information.

The evaluative level is the highest and the most advanced stage of comprehension. Evaluative comprehension is also referred to as "reading beyond the text". The readers should critically analyze the information, argue specific points in the text, and form their own viewpoints on the topic.

Interestingly the same text may not be read and interpreted by the readers in the same way and different factors that play here should be considered. It is noteworthy to mention that according to Anderson meaning constructed from the same text can vary greatly among people because of differences in the knowledge they possess (Anderson et al., 1985, p. 9).

In this regard, apart from possessing background knowledge, analytical skills, and learning ability, socio-affective factors should also be emphasized.

 A comprehensive framework that emphasizes various factors to understand the intricate process of reading comprehension is The Reading Systems Framework (RSF) developed by Perfetti and Stafura. The framework outlines two main subprocesses required for comprehension: word identification and word-to-text integration. Word identification involves converting letters into sounds and combining these sounds into words. This is a cognitive process and when it is done automatically, it will result in fluent reading. Word-to-text integration is defined as an ongoing process where individual words' meanings are continuously combined into larger units of meaning at the phrase, clause, and sentence levels and beyond (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014).

To facilitate the reading process Guthrie and Wigfield implemented concept-oriented reading instruction (CORI) which was initially intended to improve the reading skills of schoolchildren (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000). It can also be applied to university students since there are similar linguistic and extralinguistic factors directly influencing reading comprehension in their case. These factors include conceptual knowledge, low motivation, learning and knowledge goals, and evaluation.

Although the aspect of motivation is not covered in the Reading System Framework, it has been suggested that motivation plays a crucial role in becoming a good comprehender and the students' motivation for learning is directly reflected in the teaching reading process (Toste et al., 2020).

These researchers state that reading engagement is successful when the readers are motivated, strategic, socially interactive, and knowledgeable. Guthrie and Wigfield emphasize different aspects of student engagement: emphasizing content goals and real-world interaction. Based on Guthrie and Wigfield's theoretical model of engaged reading we can implement the above-mentioned teaching practice to enhance students' performance while teaching Business English to our 1st-year university students. To boost motivation for the reading material, during our classes, we have discussed the practical skills and applicability of the reading material before reading. For example, if students expect to learn practical skills and tips for developing an exemplary corporate culture from the reading material, they will strive not to miss any details. This knowledge will be later applied in their business, and they will clearly see and appreciate the interaction between the real world and the reading material.

To facilitate teaching reading comprehension, Francis Pleasant Robinson developed the SQ3R method in 1946, which he published in his book "Effective Study" available at https://www.mindtools.com/ar96jtd/sq3r

This method, still relevant for university students, involves five steps: survey, question, reading, reciting/retelling, and reviewing, which are summarized below:

Survey: reading should start with the title of the text to prepare the learner for receiving the subject. Noticing any boldface heading, subheading, graphics, italics, and end-of-chapter questions will be a great aid for sorting, comprehending, and remembering the information.

Question: Making up open-ended questions before reading the text helps the mind to be more focused and makes the learning process more engaging. Any heading of the paragraph may be turned into a question. Well-formulated questions will lead to a better understanding of the text.

Reading: The third step is the actual process of reading the text. The learner should already fill in the mental structure with the information from the text. Reading should be done paragraph by paragraph trying to answer all the open-ended questions in mind. Sometimes while reading new questions will arise and the learner may make up new ones and provide them with answers, which will lead to better comprehension of details.

Reciting (Retelling): This step should be taken to train the mind in learning while reading. After reading a paragraph a learner should stop to try recalling the information, reproducing it, and answering the question.

Reviewing: This is the final step. The learner should look through the mental organization, refine it, and begin building memory.

Taking into account these theories, we can conclude that when teaching reading skills and reading comprehension, the complex, multilevel nature of reading should be considered, and relevant methods and strategies should be implemented.

Methodology

To address the main objectives of the paper a combination of qualitative, descriptive, comparative, and analytical methods have been applied.

- With the help of a qualitative descriptive study, we have tried to present a comprehensive summary of theories, methods, and strategies for the development of teaching reading skills and enhancing reading comprehension.
- The comparative method has been applied to draw parallels between different approaches for teaching reading skills and reading comprehension, to determine the productivity of the methods and strategies suggested by different researchers in teaching reading process.
- The analytical method has been used to evaluate the productivity of methods and strategies for teaching reading comprehension and to define their practical value in teaching Business English.

Results and discussion

Reading is an indispensable part of the learning process. Effective reading skills are essential for enhancing reading comprehension and thorough understanding of the reading material. Reading comprehension has always been a topical issue in the teaching/learning process. Different researchers have suggested numerous trends to improve reading comprehension and task completion based on reading passages. Among modern trends which are classified as follows - reading-writing relationship, content-based reading, task-based reading, sustained-silent reading, and social reading as a classroom activity for students of ASUE content-based and task-based reading are applied. As ASUE 1st-year students' background knowledge of both English and Economics varies greatly, we have implemented various methods and strategies for teaching reading skills to ensure that all students can understand the main idea of the text as well as the details, taking into account the complex nature of reading comprehension. We particularly reflect on the following methods: the SQ3R method suggested by F.P. Robinson (Robinson, 1946), the KWL method by D.M. Olge (Olge, 1986), the Cornell note-taking

method available at https://lsc.cornell.edu/how-to-study/taking-notes/cornell-note-taking-system/, and the concept mapping method developed by M.K.Trochim available at https://www.billtrochim.net/mapping/mapping.htm.

As it has been mentioned, as early as in 1946, Francis Pleasant Robinson developed the method of SQ3R, and published it in his book "Effective Study". This reading comprehension method is still applicable for university students. This method has been developed by different researchers who suggest **SQ4R** and **SQ5R** methods, where additional R-s stand for Reflecting and Rehearsing. These additional steps help improve comprehension, acquire and retain knowledge.

Another instructional reading strategy is K-W-L suggested by D.M. Ogle in 1986 in his paper "KWL: A Teaching Model that Develops Active Reading of Expository Text" which may be used to guide students through the text. K-W-L charts are graphic organizers that are helpful for the learners to organize information and offer pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities. This chart is a useful tool to activate background knowledge, share learning intentions, and monitor students' learning. The author suggests that this method can be used as a group work as well.

Based on this strategy we have tried to develop our own approach to the stages of reading comprehension.

Table 1.

K: what I know	**W:** what I want to know	**L:** what I have learned
At this stage we offer a pre-reading activity intended to activate the students' background knowledge on the topic. Before looking at the text they should think of keywords, terms and phrases about the topic. Brainstorming is a good method to apply here.	During the second stage the students should list their expectations: what they expect to learn. This may be both a pre-reading activity and a while-reading activity. The instructor may invite the students to preview the table of contents, headings or any picture, chart in the text and ask the students to express in a form of a question what they would like to learn about the topic generally and specifically.	The final stage is a post-reading activity to answer the questions, as well as to list what new information students have learned. Sometimes this can be done while reading as well. The knowledge and information obtained should be checked against the first and second column to see if the learning expectations are met and the questions are answered

After explaining the strategy to students, they were asked to implement the method before and while reading the text titled "Improving your time management skills" from the "Business English" textbook. Below we showed the results.

Table 2.

K: What I Know	W: What I want to know	L: What I have learnt
1. Time management is crucial for balancing various aspects of life effectively. 2. Time management allows you to effectively and productively complete the activities and tasks, and meet the deadline. 3. Time management is an essential skill for achieving both personal and professional success. 4. Time management is the process of consciously planning and controlling the time. 5. Time management is closely related to punctuality and sense of responsibility.	1.How to develop time management skills? 2. How to make a to-do list and whether it has a highly practical value? 3. What are the psychological aspects of time management, such as how motivation and stress impact productivity?	1. Time management is a skill that takes time to develop and is different for each person. 2. Theoretically time management is easy to explain as a concept but it is hard to achieve in practice. 3. To manage our time we should focus on the goal. 4. Regular breaks and time for personal activities are necessary to avoid burnout and maintain overall well-being. 5. To manage your time effectively, there are important steps to follow: prioritizing, scheduling and delegation.

To enhance the strategy we have decided to combine it with note-taking, which helps to digest, remember, and master the reading material. Note-taking may be done while and after reading. As it is explained at learningcenter.unc.edu, there are different formats and strategies for note taking among which we think that the most productive ones for teaching Business English will be the Cornell method of note-taking and the method of concept mapping developed by M. K. Trochim.

The Cornell note-taking system was created by Cornell University researchers in the 1960s /https://lsc.cornell.edu/how-to-study/taking-notes/cornell-note-taking-system/. The method has been proven beneficial during lectures while reading and preparing for exams. Before starting the learner should divide the page into 3 sections: Cues, notes, and summary. The Cues column is on the left side, the notes column is on the right, and the summary column is at the bottom of the page. The notes column should be filled in during the reading process while the Cues

Column, which includes questions and key concepts, and a summary that reflects distilled information from the text, may be a post-reading activity. If we apply this note-taking method for the 1st-year students on the reading material from "Business English" textbook by L. Harutyunyan, the table will look as follows:

Table 3.

Title of the lesson: Types of Advertising	
CUES Column	*Notes Column*
Questions: What is the role of advertising in successful business? What types of advertising do you know? Which are traditional/ modern ways of advertising? What are benefits of online advertising? Which type of advertisement is more cost effective? Which type of advertising reaches the smallest/ the largest audience? Are all marketing compaigns successful? What are the character-istics of a successful marketing compaign? **Key concepts:** Advertising compaign Target audience Recognizable slogan	Ad compaign and business success. *Newspaper advertising* (specialist magazine) reaching target quickly and easily *Radio advertising* - limited to smaller target audience (drivers/ older generation) *TV advertising* - sight, sound, movement, color/ more persuasive *Outside advertising* - outdoor billboards/ eye-catching *Transit advertising* - posters on buses *Internet advertising:* cost effective, reaching global audience Marketing compaigns: *Coke:* Share a coke - personalized bottles, sense of individual ownership, enchanted consumers, thrilling *Nike:* Just Do It - using a celebrity, recognizable slogan, reflecting people's feelings *Volkswagen:* think small - gold standard, changing perceptions, representing disadvantage as a unique feature *Summary* Advertising is a key factor for business success. Types of advertising may be classified into traditional (Radio/TV/Newspaper) and modern (outdoor bill-boards/transit/ Internet). Successful marketing campaign can make the business thrive. Such examples are Coke/ Nike/Volkswagen campaigns. In order to succeed different strategies are applied: turning to celebrities (Michael Jordan), representing a disadvantage as an advantage. Being creative and out-of-box thinking is the key to succeed.

To check the productivity of the Cornell method we experimented with the 1st-year students, ASUE, Department of Marketing. As a reading material, we used the text "Improving Your Time Management Skills" from the "Business English" textbook. The content of the text is topical as many students struggle with time management issues, so they are eager to learn some strategies to improve it.

First, the students were subdivided into two groups, 10 students in each, and then the Cornell method of note-taking was introduced to the first group. All the students were invited to read the text in the same amount of time - 20 minutes. The most challenging part of the Cornell note-taking method was formulating questions while reading, which is the assignment for the first column. As a result, each student made up four or five questions and most of them were open-ended. Below are some of those questions made up by our students:

1. Why do some people seem to have more time than others?
2. Why do some people manage their time better than others?
3. What is the basic concept of time management?
4. Is it possible to do all the things you need at once?
5. Why is scheduling important?
6. How can a to-do list help in time management?
7. Why are to-do lists beneficial for time management?
8. What initial step is necessary for effective time management and why is it important?
9. What are the factors to consider when prioritizing tasks?
10. How can one effectively prioritize tasks to improve time management skills?
11. What should one consider if diligent time management still leaves tasks unfinished?
12. What is the benefit of delegation in time management?
13. How important is resting in time management?
14. Why is resting considered an important time management skill?
15. What are some strategies for incorporating necessary rest and breaks into a productive schedule?
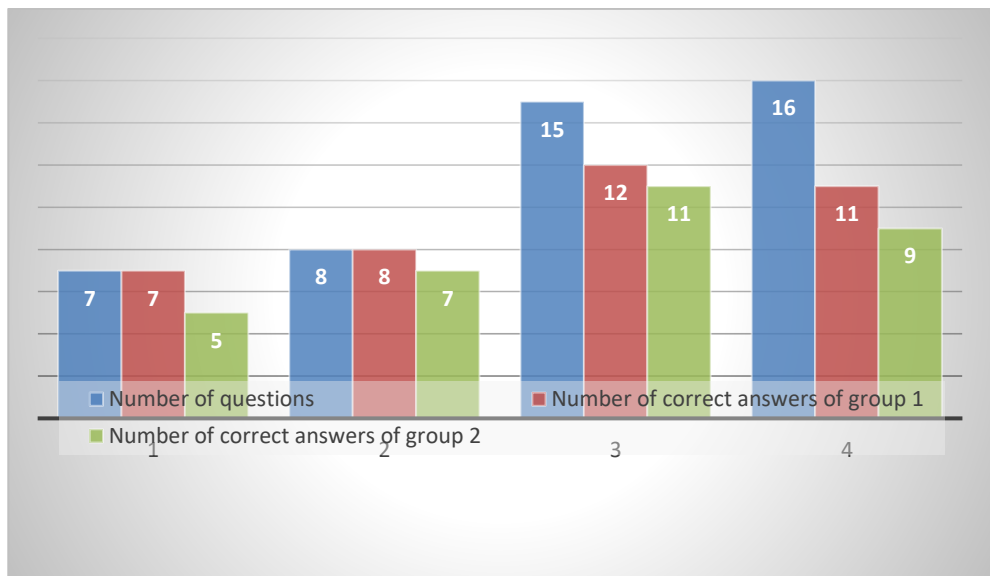
After question formation, the second important step for reading comprehension that the Cornell method suggests is writing out new terms/concepts while note-taking. This helps the students to do post-reading vocabulary-based exercises more easily. In the summary part, the students recap the information provided in the text in their own words. As we can see this method is beneficial in different respects: developing critical thinking while making up questions, enabling the students to differentiate between major and minor ideas, and improving or teaching paraphrasing. If we go further, the students can exchange the questions and try to answer them and this can serve as a new post-reading exercise.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of the Cornell note-taking method, compare the results of both groups in doing the corresponding exercises in the textbook.

Table 4.

	Ex.1 Decide whether the following statements are true or false. (7 statements)	Ex.2 Match the words below with their definitions. (the number of words 8)	Ex. 3 Find in the text the synonyms or equivalent word combinations to the following efinitions. (15 definitions)	Ex. 4 Translate the following word combinations into English. (16 word combinations)
1st group reading with the Cornell note-taking method	7 correct answers	8 correct answers	12 correct answers	11 correct answers
2nd group reading without note taking	5 correct answers	7 correct answers	11 correct answers	9 correct answers

Figure 1.

Number of questions — Number of correct answers of group 1 — Number of correct answers of group 2

As shown in Figure 1, the first group's results, who used the Cornell note-taking method, exhibited a significant comprehension of the material. Consequently, we can state that the Cornell's note-taking method is an effective tool for reviewing and revising material.

For teaching reading comprehension, the concept mapping method developed by M. K. Trochim is generally applied to texts with higher-level concepts that require further explanation. The main idea of this tool is to end up with a diagram of all important ideas and terms. The learners are free to organize the notes the way they prefer. The only point is to depict the relationship between ideas. This method can be applied both digitally or with pen and pencil, both individually and as a group work. Concept maps are useful for explaining, analyzing, comparing, and contrasting terms or ideas and their relationship which is essential for grasping the main idea of the materials and the details. This method will enhance inferential and evaluative understanding and will help to retain knowledge for a longer period of time. There are several steps for effective concept mapping presented at https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/concept-maps#4._canva-46.
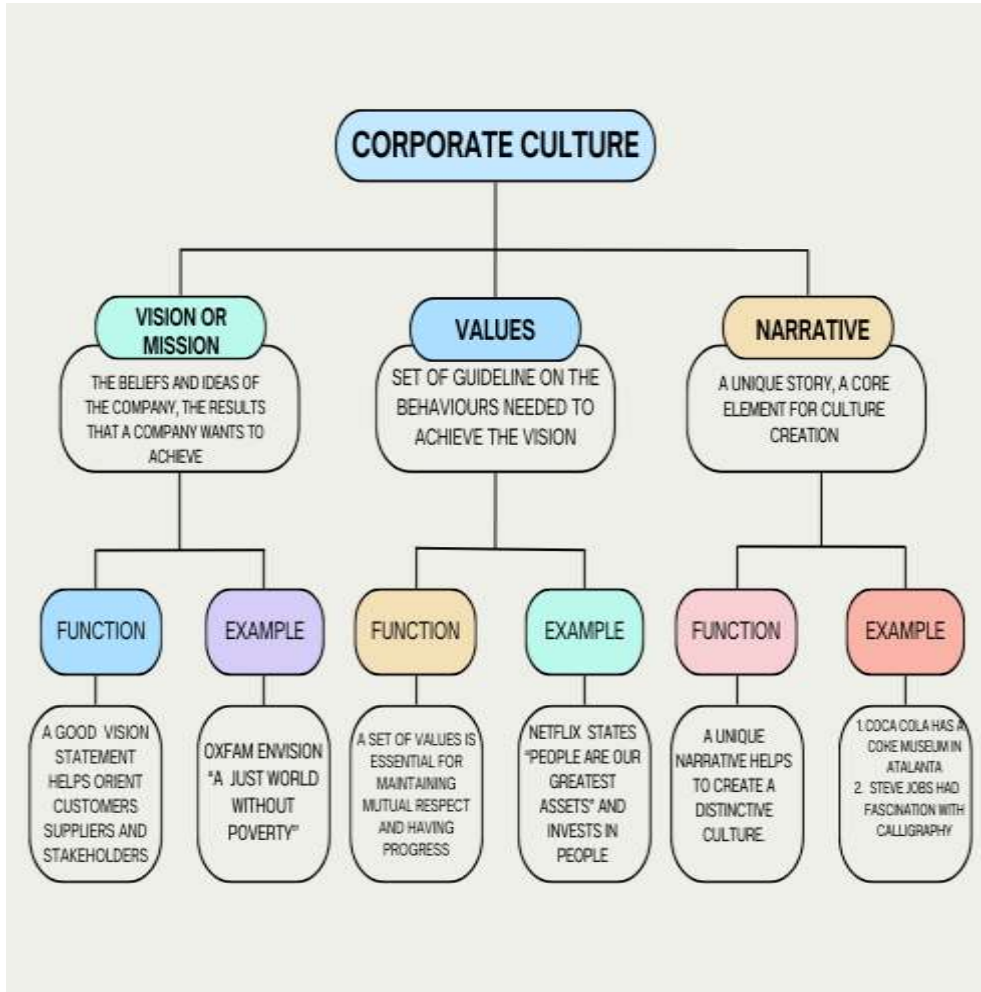
Concept mapping is based on one core concept and defining the focus question is the first step, afterwards the learner should identify related concepts in order to find and define the relationship among them. The relationship between the key concept and the related concepts is usually hierarchical. The tools and coloring for making a concept map are also of great importance in order to make it more visually effective.

The concept map should be clear and concise and should not contain any ambiguity. There are several digital tools for making concept maps such as ClickUp, Xmind, GitMind, Canva, and TheBrain.

To make a concept map a learner should follow these steps: Identify the main topic and key concepts, organize and connect key concepts, finalize the map with formatting and fact-checking, and revise the concept map as necessary. (https://www.mindmanager.com/en/features/concept-map/)

Concept maps are highly effective for reading comprehension as the process of making a concept map is dynamic and it activates analytical skills. Concept mapping is a good idea for a thorough understanding of the text and may be applied to any text that contains terms and concepts. Here we suggest an example of a concept map for the term "corporate culture" based on Unit XV, from the textbook "Business English".

Figure 2.

The use of the concept map helped our students to grasp the meaning of the text, and recognize the specific characteristics of the concept: vision, mission, values, and narrative of the concept, substantiating and enhancing these concepts with appropriate examples. Thus, we can confidently confirm that a concept map conveys information, visually enhancing reading comprehension of the texts. They help the ASUE students understand the concept in detail by viewing its different components from various angles, analyzing related ideas, and finding the relationships among them.

Conclusion

1. The reading process is a core activity for acquiring knowledge and reading comprehension should be enhanced and facilitated by the instructor. Reading is a dynamic process and to improve reading skills different factors should be considered. Besides basic linguistic factors, some extralinguistic and social factors also should be taken into account for creating a productive learning environment such as building motivation and emotional attitudes toward the reading material.

2. The use of relevant strategies and methods for enhancing reading comprehension is of utmost importance. During our classes, we have focused on the KWL reading strategy by D. M. Ogle, the note-taking method suggested by Cornell University researchers, and the concept mapping method by M.K. Trochim. These methods have been applied to improve reading skills and have proven to be practical and effective. They lead to better reading comprehension by activating brain and analytical skills before, during, and after reading.

3. We have highlighted the importance and effectiveness of note-taking methods in second language learning as they help to grasp both the main idea and the secondary or minor ideas of the text. We have analyzed and adapted Ogle's K-W-L, Cornell's note-taking, and concept mapping methods to teach business English at ASUE. We have also developed a set of exercises to improve reading comprehension skills using the "Business English" textbook by L. Harutyunyan as the basis for our curriculum material. Each of these methods contributes to a better comprehension of the reading material, additionally, concept mapping is highly productive for learning new wordstock especially new terms that need further explanation.

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Ս. Չալաբյան, Շ. Գրիգորյան – *Գործարար անգլերեն դասավանդելիս ընթերցված նյութի ընբռնումը առնչվող որոշ հարցեր.* – Սույն հոդվածն անդրադառնում է ընթերցված նյութի ընբռնման առանձնահատկություն-ներին՝ մասնավորապես քննարկելով գործարար անգլերենի ընթերցա-նության ուսուցման ռազմավարությունները և մեթոդները: Ներկայացվում և վերլուծվում են ընթերցանության տարբեր սահմանումներ և ընթերցած նյութի ընբռնման տարբեր մոտեցումներ: Կարևորվում են ընթերցանու-թյան, տեքստում կոդավորված տեղեկատվության և բովանդակության վերծանման հետ կապված որոշ խնդիրներ և մարտահրավերներ: Կիրառ-վել են գրառումների կատարման (note taking), հայեցակարգի քարտեզա-վորման (concept mapping) մեթոդները, որոնք ոչ միայն բարելավել են ուսումնական ծրագրով սահմանված նյութի ընբռնումը, այլ զարգացրել են ուսանողների քննադատական մտածողությունը և վերլուծական հմտությունները:

Բանալի բառեր. ընթերցված նյութի ընբռնում, գրառումների կատա-րում, ուսուցման ռազմավարություններ, հայեցակարգի քարտեզավորում

С. Чалабян, Ш. Григорян – *Актуальные проблемы понимания прочи-танного при преподавании делового английского языка.* – В данной статье рассматриваются современные проблемы чтения и особенности понимания прочитанного при обучении деловому английскому языку. Обсуждаются стратегии и методы, направленные на улучшение чтения на деловом английском языке. Представлены и проанализированы различные определе-ния чтения и подходы к пониманию текста. Освещены проблемы, связанные с чтением, усвоением закодированной в тексте информации и декодиро-ванием контента. В процессе обучения использовались методы конспектиро-вания и картирования понятий, которые способствовали не только лучшему усвоению материала, предусмотренного учебной программой, но и развитию критического мышления и аналитических способностей студентов.

Ключевые слова: понимание прочитанного, ведение конспектов, страте-гии обучения, картирование понятий