

TEACHER GUIDE

Reading and Listening

Reading and Listening behave a bit differently from the Writing and Speaking domains when it comes to what a learner can do to improve or *Power Up* with these skills. Often referred to as the “Black Box” skills (not easily observed), these comprehension-based domains require more exposure to written and spoken material along with application of specific strategies to aid in expanding comprehension (increase ability). While text type (text length and genre) and language complexity do play a role in comprehension, it is often more about how well the reader or listener can “guess” meaning from what they are able to extract from the chunks of language that they encounter. Unlike the productive skills, where application of specific structures and verb conjugations are clear indicators of higher levels of writing and speaking ability, receptive skills require much more language processing and “critical thinking” to determine what the author intended in their message, with even small chunks of language. Creating with the language (writing and speaking) allows the writer or speaker full control over the language that they can use/produce and is easy to observe and measure. Comprehension, on the other hand, is much more internal to the reader/listener and there are limited ways to check understanding, making clear levels of ability more difficult to identify and assign without some formal means of evaluation or comprehension checking.

Therefore, our approach in addressing these challenge areas is to share the core skills that are required to accomplish these critical comprehension tasks and give several strategies that can be used to increase ability with these domains on a consistent manner across all levels. The most critical take away from this is that it is necessary to teach both reading and listening in direct ways, showing how to apply strategies (modeling) that will aid in achieving higher levels of comprehension. Another critical point to consider is the amount of exposure that learners need to have with realia-based written material and audio samples, which simulate what happens in the every-day world around any given learner. In the following tables, we have outlined critical definitions of what each skill really entails and have included several strategies that learners should use to help increase skill and ability with these domains. You can share this information with the test takers as you feel it will be helpful for them.

General Guidelines and Teaching Strategies

1. **Make it a point to include on-demand comprehension activities with both written and spoken passages/audio of realia-based reading and listening tasks on a (more) regular basis.**
2. **Model, Model, Model. Take time to model what good readers and good listeners do. This will allow you to teach strategies, rather than just rote memorization of vocabulary and structures.**
3. **Teach learners the power of metacognition and why it will help them retain learning better.**
 - a. Think aloud protocol (TAP) – learners talk about what they know and don't know as they engage in comprehension-based activities. In this sharing, they come to recognize natural strategies that are used to facilitate and assist in comprehension.
 - b. Word mapping – learners can generate word maps that will build connections with previously learned and new vocabulary and expand their depth and breadth of vocabulary.
 - c. Research other metacognition strategies and implement those with your students.
4. **Assess reading and listening on a regular basis:**
 - a. Comprehension check: Ask questions that address the critical details of the text addressing: who, what, where, when, why, and how type questions.
 - b. Have learners write summaries of what they have read or heard. Simple lists of details are fine for lower levels and this can be done in either English for lower level learners or in the target language for students at higher levels.

The following table outlines general skills or abilities with Reading and suggests actions that will help attain higher levels.

What is Reading?	Strategies for Improving Reading Skills
<p>Reading is a skill-based activity that requires the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ SKIM (quick observation of the text to look for known vocabulary, general topics and formatting/organization of the text) ■ SCAN (looking for some specific details inside of the text, answering who, what, when, where, why and how, and using contextual clues) ■ Read for Deeper Comprehension (understanding main ideas, points of view, author’s purpose and direct facts in the text. Generally, able to comprehend at least 70% of the text or above – “Lexile approach”) ■ Apply Critical Thinking (reading between the lines and making inferences, based on the author’s implied meaning) ■ Reading is NOT decoding or translation. Translation is a much more complex and complicated task. Do not translate word for word, but rather, use the skills listed above to initially interact with the texts and identify all that you already know. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reading is NOT a passive activity. Always read with a purpose or specific focus in mind. ■ In tests like the STAMP test, read the context and the questions FIRST and then skim and scan the text to locate the answer. ■ Build meaning on what you KNOW in the text and let that knowledge direct your understanding. ■ Guess the meaning or answer from what you KNOW. It is ok to guess when it comes to reading. We call this “educated guessing” because it is based on those things that you do know from the text and helps to give meaning to those things that you do not feel that you know for sure in the text. ■ Slow down and think about the context and consider the types of things that you might encounter in that context. For example, if you see a context that states, “An advertisement in a newspaper,” you should consider the types of advertisements that might be found in a newspaper. This focus will allow you to activate specific vocabulary/topics in your mind and be better prepared for the text.

The following table outlines general skills or abilities with Listening and suggests actions that will help attain higher levels.

What is Listening?	Strategies for Improving Listening Skills
<p>Listening is a skill-based activity that requires the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hear input stimulus (audible sound/language). ■ Identify sounds in terms of words, phrases and sentences or in other words “Language”. ■ Comprehend the language spoken or presented. ■ Listening is usually the strongest skill for immersion students and the weakest skill for traditional language learning students due to exposure to extended listening passages or tasks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Listening requires focus and attention. ■ Listening requires much practice to be able to differentiate word boundaries and deal with different accents and pronunciation elements. ■ In tests like the STAMP test, read the context and the questions FIRST and then listen for the specific answer. You are able to listen to the audio sample two times in the test. ■ Practice eavesdropping (listening to spoken language live or via media.) Take notes on what you do know compared to what you do not know as you ‘eavesdrop’. Select specific vocabulary to study and use in your own language or teach someone else the things you learned. ■ The elements that make listening difficult, and that you MAY be able to control are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rate of Speech – asking someone to slow down when speaking may help you better focus on word boundaries and assist in understanding. ○ Background Noise – eliminating background noises or distractions will help. If you are in a loud environment move to a more quiet location or ask for music or other sounds to be minimized. ○ Repetition – asking someone to repeat something will allow you one more opportunity to listen for specific details. However, if you ask them to repeat something more than one time, the speaker may change what they are saying to make it “easier,” when in reality it has now complicated things because they are adding new information. Also, be specific in your request and let them know that you did not understand a specific word or section rather than having them repeat the entire statement. This lets them know where the problem was for you and they can then just deliver that word or section.

Writing and Speaking

The following tables outline general skills or abilities at each level and suggest actions that will help you attain higher levels.

Novice-Low (STAMP Level 1)	Do these things to Power Up to Novice-Mid (STAMP Level 2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At this level, I am able to create individual words that have no extended meaning. ■ I can share some simple vocabulary, which deals with the prompt/task/ situation, but I tend to struggle to connect those words to create meaning. 	<p>Text Type (Novice-Mid) Phrases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work on increasing vocabulary, including verbs that cover a variety of topics that are at the Novice level. These are topics that you generally experience each day in your every-day life: self, home, friends, school, weather, clothing, food, time, pets/animals, etc. ● Try to connect different words to a verb to create thoughts and generate simple sentences where possible. <p>Functions/Structures (Grammar):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase vocabulary connections to verbs. This helps to create more meaning in language production.
Novice-Mid (STAMP Level 2)	Do these things to Power Up to Novice-High (STAMP Level 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At this level, I am beginning to develop the ability to create meaning as they form a connection between words. ■ Specifically, I can connect some basic subjects and verbs or verbs and objects, but I may be inconsistent at doing this. ■ I am often limited in my vocabulary to Novice level topics that I experience in my every-day life or that I have recently learned. 	<p>Text Type (Novice-High) Simple Sentences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work on connecting words that create very simple sentences. ● Focus on creating simple meaning with the use of different verbs that deal with a wider variety of topics or that address different aspects of a task. ● Try to re-create and reorganize simple sentences using your own language. <p>Functions/Structures (Grammar):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Know what it means to create a simple sentence. (What is a subject? What is a verb? What is an object? Learn these terms and know why these terms are important.) <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't be afraid of making errors! Focus on the meaning you wish to convey in your sentences and give all the language that you can. Accuracy will increase naturally as you move into the next level.

Novice-High (STAMP Level 3)	Do these things to Power Up to Intermediate-Low (STAMP Level 4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At this level, I can create simple sentences with very basic control and accuracy. ■ There are often errors in my responses, while at the same time I might have good control with some very simple structures and functions of the language that I have just learned or studied. ■ At the Novice levels, errors are expected as I try to create simple sentences. ■ Generally, the sentences that I am able to create are very basic and simple with few, if any, added details. 	<p>Text Type (Intermediate-Low) Strings of Sentences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work on increasing the amount of language you add to each sentence to create greater depth of meaning and begin to string sentences together. ● Expand vocabulary beyond every-day life to topics such as travel, occupations, health, shopping, local community etc... <p>Functions/Structures (Grammar):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand what constitutes Added Detail (details that add depth and clarity to the language: prepositional phrases, descriptive words, basic use of helping verbs, adverbs and more specific vocabulary... yes, learning these terms is important.) <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand how different forms of Added Detail can help create a bigger picture. Try to show variety in your sentence structure as well. ● Don't be afraid of making errors! Use all the language that you can in order to create more detail in your writing and speaking.

Intermediate-Low (STAMP Level 4)	Do these things to Power Up to Intermediate-Mid (STAMP Level 5)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At this level, I can create simple sentences with some added detail; such sentences help create VARIETY. ■ At the Intermediate Low level, simple sentences are enhanced by the use of prepositional phrases, helping verb usage, as well as some adverbs and a variety of adjectives. ■ I generally create independent sentences (ideas) that can be moved around without affecting the overall meaning of the response. ■ There are still a number of errors in my response, but I have fairly good control of more basic sentences. ■ I am feeling more confident in using different structures and expanding vocabulary and taking more risks with my responses. 	<p>Text Type (Intermediate-Mid) Connected Sentences basic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase the amount of language you use to address different aspects of the prompt. Strive to create groupings of ideas which helps increase connectedness. ● Continue to increase the use of extended and expanding vocabulary with less common topics. <p>Functions/Structures (Grammar):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strive to use different forms of Added Detail, creating greater clarity and richness in your sentences. ● Try to add elements of complexity to your sentence structures. There are many ways you can add complexity! Consider how you can create longer sentences using some complex structures. Increase your use of dependent and independent clauses - not just compound sentences using 'and', 'but' or 'because'. Be careful to not create run-on sentences. Use complexity to add depth of meaning. Use of other tense forms that are beyond the simple 'present tense'. It is expected that these new skills will be presented with errors – don't worry about the errors, just do your best. <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make a point to speak or write every day using the new vocabulary intermixed with what you are more confident about. The more you use the new vocabulary, the more natural it will become for you. ● Don't be afraid of making errors! (Yes, this is a constant reminder. Errors show that you are stretching and trying new things at this level.)

Intermediate-Mid (STAMP Level 5)	Do these things to Power Up to Intermediate-High (STAMP Level 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At this level, I can now create enough language to show groupings of ideas. ■ My thoughts are loosely connected and cannot be moved around without affecting meaning. ■ I can also create a few sentences with complexity and am able to use some transition words. ■ I am also able to use more than just simple present tense, but often make mistakes when I try to use other tenses. ■ My vocabulary use is expanding and I am able to use more than the usual, high frequency or most common vocabulary. ■ I feel that I am able to create new language on my own and communicate my everyday needs without too much difficulty. 	<p>Text Type (Intermediate-High) Connected Sentences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to work on increasing vocabulary breadth and variety. ● Increase use of complex structures in your response including, but not limited to dependent clauses. There are a variety of ways to create complexity. ● Focus on creating connections throughout your writing and speaking responses. This will generate a natural flow from beginning, to middle, to end and will bring your ideas together. ● Strive to include many details and as much descriptive language as possible to create a clear picture of the situation about which you are writing or speaking. ● Use a variety of transitional words and phrases and work on increasing these terms to help link and connect your thoughts and ideas. <p>Functions/Structures (Grammar):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use a greater variety of sentence lengths and types. ● Use more transition words and phrases to help increase connectedness throughout the response. ● Increase your ability to use a variety of verb tenses accurately. Be aware of the language that is created as you use different tenses –recognize the strength of language when you are able to switch from one time frame to the next with increased accuracy. <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read novels out loud in your target language. Record unfamiliar words/phrases in your vocab-notepad and strive to use them throughout the week. ● Don't be afraid of making errors with new structures. However, at this level, errors should begin to diminish with most basic time frames. You are noticing that you do not have to translate as much in your head before speaking.

<p>Intermediate-High (STAMP Level 6)</p>	<p>Do these things to Power Up to Advanced-Low (STAMP Level 7)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ At this level, I have good control of the language and feel quite confident about an increasing range of topics. ■ There are still some occasional errors in my language production, but that does not hinder my ability to communicate what I need to share. ■ I can use circumlocution (using a round-about way of saying something because of the vocabulary I lack) to explain or describe things for which I do not know specific vocabulary or structures. ■ I can understand and use different time frames and am just beginning to develop the ability to switch most time frames (going back and forth between verb tenses) with accuracy. ■ I can use transition words and concepts with some ease to create more clear connections between ideas. ■ My language has a more natural flow, but I still may have some unnatural pauses or hesitations. 	<p>Text Type (Advanced-Low) Paragraph Structure basic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Endeavor to learn vocabulary from topics you usually do not learn in formal class settings. Expand your vocabulary breadth by reading and listening to news and other current events, or just by listening to native speakers. ● Strive to create language that is cohesive and unified with a beginning, middle and end. Clear organization of thoughts and ideas is critical to reach this level. ● Learn and use idiomatic and colloquial language. This will help make your speech and writing more natural and authentic. <p>Functions/Structures (Grammar):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strive to incorporate more complex language. This includes a wider variety of verb conjugations / time frames as well as less frequently used transition words / phrases. ● Accuracy in functions/structures is important at this level. Pay close attention to those areas where you are not confident nor sure about correct usage. At this level, use of correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, accents, tonal markers, umlauts, etc. (all language specific features) increase in importance – especially if your desire is to reach Advanced levels where accurate work and/or academic language is expected. <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connect with as many native speakers as you can each day. You can use a variety of technology resources to do this. Take notes of new vocabulary you hear and try to incorporate that language in daily conversation. ● Listen to music or watch movies in the target language each day. Repeat along with the singer – or actor. This will allow you to practice speaking more quickly – as well as help you acquire cultural perspectives and learn new vocabulary in fun and engaging ways. ● Teach what you are learning to a friend or relative. This is a great way to process and remember new content and concepts.

Updated March 2024