English News for Listening and Reading Comprehension

Sheri Kumar
Research Scholar in English, Kakatiya University, and Degree Lecturer in English, TTWRDC for Men, Karimnagar M: 9441115310

Abstract

It is universally acknowledged that readers or listeners generally expect variety. English News becomes one of the good sources of variety as the news items keep on changing daily. Comprehension skill makes one understand, analyze and respond to oral and written communication, improve one's focus on listening and reading and take one to the next level of motivation. Good vocabulary, intermittent questioning, context clues, summarizing, and looking for the main idea are some strategies one can use to work on reading comprehension skill. Well-designed comprehension questions covering literal, critical, evaluative, inferential, predictive and affective questions help students interact with the text to create or construct meaning. They help the students begin to think critically and intelligently. While listening one has to be very attentive and critical to comprehend oral presentation as it involves the tone, and mood of the speaker. An attempt is made here to use daily English news broadcast by All India Radio. Whatsapp Groups called English Webinar and Success Mitra were created to make audio files of news available along with their transcripts on a daily basis. Soft copies of English newspapers are also posted to select news items or passages of teachers' choice.

KEYWORDS: English news bulletin, comprehension skill, inference, prediction, evaluation, personal response.

Introduction

The word comprehension refers to one's capacity for understanding. It judges one's power or the faculty of judgement. Though we understand several things and pass judgements, some mysteries are still beyond our comprehension.

Good vocabulary, intermittent questioning, context clues, summarizing, and looking for the main idea are some strategies one can use to work on comprehension skills. Comprehension skill makes one understand, analyze and respond to oral and written communication, improve one's focus on listening and reading and take one to the next level of motivation.

A lengthy passage is generally given with five questions to be answered in several academic and competitive examinations. It is meant for testing candidates' literal, critical, evaluative, affective, predictive and global comprehension. Hence, it is covered in most of the examinations. It becomes a scoring topic as it is attempted by almost all candidates in an easy way.

Well-designed comprehension questions help students interact with the text to create or construct meaning. They help our students begin to think critically and intelligently. While listening one has to be very attentive and critical to comprehend oral presentation as it involves the tone, mood and body language of the speaker.

In a study of first-grade teachers, Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Allington, Block, Morrow, Tracey, Baker, Brooks, Cronin, Nelson, and Woo (2001) found that exemplary first-grade teachers had their students actively engaged in actual reading and writing through activities that involved reading, writing, and doing things with the text. This active involvement contrasted sharply with other classrooms where the students' engagement was passive-taking turns reading aloud or listening to their teachers.

Richard R. Day and Jeong-suk Park's taxonomies of the types of comprehension and the forms of questions are covered to a great extent. The six types of comprehension are based on experiences in teaching reading and developing materials. Day and Park do not intend their taxonomy to cover all possible interpretations of comprehension; however, they have found the six types to be useful in helping our students become interactive readers and attentive listeners. Their taxonomy has been influenced in particular by the work of Pearson and Johnson (1972) and Nuttall (1996).

Literal comprehension

Literal comprehension refers to an understanding of the straightforward meaning of the text, such as facts, vocabulary, dates, times, and locations. Questions of literal comprehension can be answered directly and explicitly from the text. An example of a literal comprehension question about this article is: How many types of comprehension do the authors discuss?

Inference

Making inferences involves more than a literal understanding. Readers or listeners may initially find it difficult to answer inference questions because the answers are based on material that is in the text but not explicitly stated. An inference involves students combining their literal understanding of the text with their own knowledge and intuitions. An example of a question that requires the reader to make an inference is: Is the news of today partial or unbiased?

Prediction

Prediction involves readers or listeners' using both their understanding of the passage and their own knowledge of the topic and related matters in a systematic fashion to determine what might happen next or after a story ends. We use two varieties of prediction, while-reading and post-reading. While-reading prediction questions differ from post-reading prediction questions in that readers or listeners can immediately learn the accuracy of their predictions by continuing to read the passage or listen to the presentation. In contrast, post-reading prediction questions generally have no right answers in that students cannot continue to read to confirm their predictions. However, predictions must

be supported by information from the text. Generally, scholarly articles or English News do not allow for post-reading prediction questions. Other types of writing, such as fiction, are fertile ground for such questions.

Evaluation

Evaluation requires readers or listeners to give a global or comprehensive judgment about some aspect. For example, a comprehension question that requires the reader to give an evaluation of this article is: How will the information in this article be useful to you? In order to answer this type of question, students must use both a literal understanding of the text and their knowledge of the text's topic, news, and related issues. Some students, because of cultural factors or political affiliations, may be reluctant to be critical or to disagree with the printed word or established norms. In such circumstances, we have to make sure to include both positive and negative aspects of an issue.

Personal response

Personal response requires readers or listeners to respond with their feelings for the text and the subject. The answers are not found in the text; they come strictly from the readers or listeners. While no personal responses are incorrect, they cannot be unfounded, but they must relate to the content. An example of a comprehension question that requires a personal response is: What do you like or dislike about this article? What do you like or dislike in today's news? Here cultural factors or political affiliations again may make some students hesitate to be critical.

Whatsapp Groups called English Webinar and Success Mitra were created to make audio files of news available along with their transcripts on a daily basis. Soft copies of English newspapers are also posted to select news items or passages of teachers' choice. Here is an example:

Visit the Mobile App of *News On Air* to listen to the audio or quickly follow https://youtu.be/VefwvfL1Y68 :

All India Radio presents Morning News (of January 27, 2022).
Good morning! I am Sarabjith Kaur and with me is Prashanth Kumar Sinha.

THE HEADLINES:
Prime Minister Narendra Modi to host the first meeting of the India-Central Asia Summit today.
Government convenes an all-party meeting on the 31st of this month to ensure smooth functioning of the Budget Session of Parliament.
Filing of nominations for the fourth phase of assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh to begin today.
BJP announces another list of candidates for Assembly Elections in Uttarakhand and Goa; Congress releases a list of candidates for Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.
Urban local body polls to be held in Tamil Nadu on the 19th of next month.

Karnataka government to upgrade 250 Primary Health Centers into Health and Wellness Centers in the first phase.

Government notifies the scheme to make drone certification simpler, faster and transparent.

BCCI announces Indian squads for ODI and Twenty 20 series against West Indies.

As the number of COVID-19 cases is rising fast in several parts of the country, we appeal to our listeners to be vigilant and to get fully vaccinated and help others including children between 15 and 18 years get vaccinated.

With the new Omicron variant of corona virus causing concern, please continue to follow these three simple steps to stay safe: Wear a face mask. Maintain Do Gaz Ki Doori for social distancing. Focus on hand and face hygiene.

For any COVID-related information and guidance contact National helpline numbers -- 011-23978046 and 1075. And now the news in detail:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be hosting the first meeting of the India-Central Asia Summit in a virtual format today. Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan will participate. Mr Modi had paid a historic visit to all Central Asian countries in 2015. Subsequently, there have been exchanges at high levels at bilateral and multilateral forums. Our correspondent reports that the Summit is symbolic of the importance attached by the Leaders of India and the Central Asian countries to a comprehensive and enduring India-Central Asia partnership.

"This will be the first engagement of its kind between India and the Central Asian countries at the level of leaders. The summit is a reflection of India's growing engagement with the Central Asian countries, which are a part of India's extended neighborhood. During the Summit, the leaders are expected to discuss steps to take forward India-Central Asia relations to newer heights. They are also expected to exchange views on regional and international issues of interest, especially the evolving regional security situation. Anand Kumar, AIR News Delhi."

The Central Government has convened an all-party meeting on 31st of this month to ensure smooth functioning of the Budget Session of Parliament. The meeting has been convened by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi which will be held virtually in view of the Covid-19 situation. The floor leaders of political parties in the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha have been invited to the meeting.

The Budget Session of Parliament is to begin on the same day, the 31st of January with President Ram Nath Kovind's address to both the Houses of Parliament assembled together at 11 am.

In a tweet, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister also said, the first part of the Budget Session will commence on 31st of this month, with the address of the President to both the Houses. He said, on the 1st of next month, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will

present the Union Budget. Mr Joshi also informed that to ensure Covid safety protocol, both the Houses of Parliament will function in shifts.

Filing of nominations for the fourth phase of assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh will begin today with the issuance of notification. The state will go to the polls in seven phases from the 10th February to the 7th March. The fourth Phase of polling in Uttar Pradesh will be conducted on the 23rd of February in 59 Assembly Constituencies spread over nine districts.

Today is also the last day for the withdrawal of candidature for the first phase of Assembly Elections in Uttar Pradesh. In all, 658 nominations were found valid during the scrutiny. In this phase, 58 Assembly Constituencies will go to the polls on 10th February. The counting of votes in the five states will be taken up together on 10th March.

Campaigning for assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh is in full swing. Major political parties have entered into pre-poll alliances. The State has a total of 403 seats, where polling will be held in seven phases from 10th February till the 7th March. More from our correspondent:

"The Bharatiya Janata Party has formed an alliance with Anupriya Patel's Apna Dal (Sonelal) and NISHAD Party led by Sanjay Nishad. The Samajwadi Party has entered into an alliance with the Rashtriya Lok Dal, Shivpal Yadav's Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia), Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party led by Omprakash Rajbhar, Janvadi Party (Socialist), Apna Dal (Kamerawadi) led by Krishna Patel and Mahan Dal. Meanwhile, the Congress and Bahujan Samaj Party have announced to go solo in the upcoming Assembly elections. Asaduddin Owaisi's All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen-AIMIM has also formed an alliance with Babu Singh Kushwaha's Jan Adhikar Party and Bharat Mukti Morcha. Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad's Azad Samaj Party has also floated an alliance with over 30 regional parties. The alliance is named Samajik Parivartan Morcha. The Janta Dal United, is contesting the polls independently in Uttar Pradesh. All India Trinamool Congress has decided not to field its candidates in the State. ADITYA SHUKLA, AIR NEWS, GORAKHPUR.

Ahead of the Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah met Jat leaders from western Uttar Pradesh and held discussions on various issues. The meeting took place at the residence of BJP MP Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma in Delhi yesterday. The meeting was attended by Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan, BJP MP Satyapal Singh and party leaders from Western Uttar Pradesh.

Talking to reporters, BJP MP Pravesh Sahib Singh Verma said that the BJP's door to RLD Chief Jayant Chaudhary is always open but he has chosen the wrong path. Mr Verma said that the Jat community will talk to him in this regard.

BJP has released the second list of nine candidates for the Assembly Elections in Uttarakhand. Those included in the list are Shaila Rani Rawat, who will contest from Kedarnath Assembly seat, Pramod Nainwal from Ranikhet seat, Mohan Singh Bisht from

Lalkuwa and Jogendrapal Singh Routela has been fielded from the Haldwani Assembly seat in the State. The names of the candidates were finalized by the BJP Central Election Committee.

The BJP has released the second list of six candidates for the Goa Assembly elections. Those included in the list are Rajesh TulshidarPatnekar who will contest from Bicholim Assembly seat, Antonio Fernandes from St. Cruiz seat while Janita Pandurang Madkaikar has been fielded from the Cumbarjua seat in the State. The names of the candidates were finalized by the BJP Central Election Committee.

Congress has released another list of 10 candidates for the ensuing Assembly elections in Uttarakhand. Those included in the list are Harish Rawat who will contest from Lalkuwa Assembly seat, Mahender Pal Singh from Ramnagar seat, Yashpal Rana from Roorkee seat, while Anupama Rawat will be the party candidate from Haridwar Rural Assembly seat in the State. The names of the candidates were selected by the Central Election Committee of the Congress.

The Congress has released another list of 89 candidates for Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections. Those included in the list are Sandeep Rana who will contest from the Saharanpur Assembly seat, Akbari Begum has been fielded from Bijnor, Saroj Devi from Hathras, Sandeep Tiwari from Firozabad and Krishna Kant Sharma will be the party candidate from the Bareilly Assembly seat in Uttar Pradesh. The names of the candidates were selected by the Central Election Committee of Congress.

Tamil Nadu State election commission has announced to hold urban local body polls on 19th of next month. Announcing the election schedule, State election Commissioner V. Palanikumar said, polls will be held for various posts in urban local bodies in 21 corporations, 138 municipalities and 490 town panchayats in a single phase on the 19th of next month. The counting of votes will be on the 22nd of next month. Polling will commence from 7 am and conclude at 6 pm.

The Commission will hold the indirect elections on 4th March this year for the posts of Mayors, Deputy Mayors in Corporations, Chairman and Vice-Chairman in municipalities and town panchayats.

Karnataka Health and Medical Education Minister, Dr. K Sudhakar, has informed that 250 Primary Health Centers in the state will be upgraded into Health and Wellness Centers in the first phase. He was speaking to media persons in Chickballapur yesterday after laying a foundation stone for the construction of a model Primary Health Center. The model Center will be built at the cost of nine crore rupees on a plot measuring 25 thousand square feet.

Speaking about the Covid pandemic trend in the state, the minister said that the Covid caseload is showing a declining trend in Bengaluru which has the highest number of daily fresh cases. In other districts, there is a gradual decline. Saying that only one to two

percent of Covid positive patients are getting admitted to the hospital, the minister said that there is no pressure on the hospitals right now. Compared to the last two Covid waves, the third wave is faster but not virulent. The case fatality rate right now is around 0.04 percent. At the same time, the recovery rate is also high.

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai launched Gram One programme in 3026 Gram Panchayats spread over 12 districts yesterday. The scheme is aimed at taking government services to the doors of people at the grassroot level. The programme will be launched across the state by the end of March. More detail from our Correspondent:

"Gram One kiosks will provide Aadhar Card, Ration card, Caste certificates and other services related to the Department of Agriculture, Horticulture, Revenue, Women and Child Welfare and Social Welfare. A separate cell is set up with equipment and data entry operators in the offices of tahsildars to receive the applications. The e-governance department will be monitoring and reviewing the programme. This will prevent people in villages from going to Taluk offices and reduce corruption. All the applications will be received through the kiosks and fed into the Government portal and processed online. The Chief Minister has said that modern technology will play a key role in taking the villages from Gram Swaraj to Gram Suraj. He disclosed that during the experimental stage of the Gram One programme, about six lakh petitions were received and services provided without a hitch in four districts. Sudhindra, AIR News, Bengaluru".

The Government has notified drone certification schemes to make the certification of drones simpler, faster and transparent. In a tweet, the Civil Aviation Ministry said, along with the liberalized drone rules, airspace map, the PLI scheme and the single window Digital Sky Platform, will help the drone manufacturing industry in India. It said, this is another step in making India the drone hub of the world by 2030.

The Government has been working to establish a world-leading drone ecosystem in India, which will create the physical and digital infrastructure to support safe, efficient and secure access to the Indian airspace by millions of drones. Drone technology is evolving on a daily basis with new improvements coming in a rapid scale. The drones offer tremendous benefits to almost every sector of the economy, including agriculture, infrastructure, emergency response, transportation and geospatial mapping.

And that is the end of this news bulletin. (1940 words)

Now answer the following literal, critical, evaluative, inferential, predictive and affective questions:

1. Who are the news readers today?
2. How are the words 'all', 'minister', 'government' 'Parliament' pronounced?
3. How many tone / breath groups are there in the headlines?
4. What do you mean by 'protocol'?
5. The synonym of 'issuance' (a) announcement (b) withdrawal (c) importance
   (d) broadcast

6. The opposite of 'declining' a) surging (b) receding (c) reducing (d) diminishing
7. Who are the members of India-Central Asia Summit?
8. Why is the Summit organized?
9. What issues are going to be exchanged in the Summit?
10. What will be the outcome of an all-party meeting?
11. Who will win the elections in UP?
12. Who is conveying an all-party meeting?
13. Why is an all-party meeting convened online?
14. Why are PHCs upgraded now?
15. Why is the Government making drone certification simpler?
16. What event is taking place in cricket today?
17. What steps are recommended to contain the Omicron variant?
18. How are the names of viruses given?
19. Whom to contact for any covid-related info?
20. Why will both Houses of the Parliament function in shifts?
21. When is the first phase of polls in UP?
22. When will the results of UP Polls be declared?
23. What are the alliances of BJP in UP Polls?
24. How many parties are in the fray as per Aditya Shukla?
25. Why is Pravesh MP being criticized?
26. Who will convince Pravesh MP?
27. What elections are to be held in Tamil Nadu?
28. How many urban local bodies are there in Tamil Nadu?
29. How are the Heads of Corporations elected?
30. Who is contesting from Kedarnath Assembly this time?
31. Where is JP Madkaikar contesting?
32. The Congress released the first list of candidates for Assembly Elections in Uttarakhand. Yes or No.
33. Saharanpur Assembly seat was declared in the first list. Yes or No.
34. Which news item do you like and why?
35. Is the news today partial or unbiased?

Conclusion

The use of well-designed comprehension questions can be used to promote an understanding of a text or improve listening comprehension with correct pronunciation. However, comprehension questions are only a means to an end. The use of questions by themselves does not necessarily result in readers or listeners' understanding. They can be used to promote a discussion of the answers, both the right and wrong ones, so that students are actively involved in creating meaning. Comprehension questions should not be overdone. Even the most highly motivated readers or listeners become bored if they are asked several questions in a shorter text. Our ultimate goal is moving beyond a literal understanding of a text and allowing our readers or listeners to use their own knowledge while reading or listening. It may be challenging, however, for beginners to create their own understanding, but in the company of advanced learners they also improve their comprehension skills.

Inference questions can have clearly correct and incorrect responses. In contrast, prediction, evaluation, and personal response answers are correct as long as they depend primarily on students' reactions to what they read or listen. The evaluative and personal response answers not only depend primarily on readers or listeners' reactions to what they have read or listened to, but they need to reflect a global understanding of the text.

Teachers in more effective schools are more frequently observed asking higher-level questions that go beyond a literal understanding of a text, than teachers in less effective schools (Knapp, 1995; Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, and Rodriguez, 2002).

Guszak (1967, cited in Pearson and Johnson, 1972: 154) found that students performed well when answering factual questions. But our students need training in higher order skills of comprehension. Richard R. Day and Jeong-suk Park's taxonomy of comprehension types is not an inventory of reading skills and strategies. It is, rather, an overview of types of understanding that foreign language learners need to have if they are to read or listen to a text with more than a literal understanding.

Comprehension questions on daily English news generate keen interest in the things happening, and this knowledge of current events will help our students to improve their general knowledge which will be useful for all their academic and competitive examinations. Gradually, they can be trained into critical and creative listeners and readers.

Our experiments at Telangana Tribal Welfare Armed Forces Preparatory Degree College for Men, Ashoknagar, District Warangal, Resonance Junior College, Hanamkonda, with the students, and Success Academy, Hyderabad, with competitive aspirants have proved fruitful. They generate daily excitement as they are exposed to changing news every day. The candidates have become careful and critical readers and attentive listeners who have also improved their knowledge of English pronunciation and correct way of reading aloud a text with proper tone groups, dividing utterances into sense or meaningful groups as it is done by these trained news readers.

These news bulletins generate the latest topics for group discussion and participants have become vocal as they are from their daily experiences. Some searching questions made the participants go beyond the text and collect additional information for further discussion.

References

Adams, M. J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Guszak, F. J. (1967). "Teacher questioning and reading". *The Reading Teacher*, 21, 227-34.

Knapp, M. S. (1995). *Teaching for meaning in high-poverty classrooms*. New York: Teachers College Press. RFL 17.1 – "Developing reading comprehension questions" http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl 69

News On Air, News Services Division, All India Radio News, Mobile App for audio and transcripts of the news bulletins.

Nuttall, C. (1996). *Teaching reading skills in a foreign language*. (2nd ed.) Oxford: Heinemann.

Pearson, P. D. & Johnson, D. D. (1972). *Teaching reading comprehension*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Perfetti, C. A. (1985). *Reading ability*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Pressley, M., Wharton-McDonald, R., Allington, R., Block, C. C., Morrow, L., Tracey, D., Baker, K., Brooks, G., Cronin, J., Nelson, E., & Woo, D. (2001). "A study of effective first-grade literacy instruction". *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 5, 35-58.

Richard R. Day and Jeong-suk Park. "Developing reading comprehension questions," *Reading in a Foreign Language*, Volume 17, No. 1, April 2005, ISSN 1539-0578, http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl

Taylor, B. M., Peterson, D. S., Pearson, P. D., & Rodriguez, M. C. (2002). "Looking inside classrooms: Reflecting on the "How" as well as the "What" in effective reading instruction". *The Reading Teacher*, 56(3), 270-279.