

Elaborating Reading Strategies in Textbooks (German as a Foreign Language)

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Abstract: With the development of globalization, foreign language acquisition plays an increasingly important role in everyday life, in order to communicate fluently with each other without obstacles and to get to know a new culture. Reading comprehension is an indispensable skill in foreign language teaching. The question of how reading strategies can support and optimize reading comprehension in foreign language teaching has been a controversial and popular topic of discussion in the scientific field of "German as a foreign language" for almost four decades. It is assumed that reading strategies can positively influence reading comprehension and reading competence. Nowadays, the mediation and embedding of reading strategies in foreign language teaching and curriculum are mandatory and helpful. The use of reading strategies is assigned a meaningful task in DaF (German as a foreign language) textbooks within the framework of systematic training. The present article provides a theoretical overview of the elaborative reading strategies. In between, they are presented in detail.

Keywords: Elaborative Reading Strategies; German Language; Textbooks

Introduction

Unlike other reading strategies, elaborative reading strategies go beyond the surface of the text. The text content is not reduced but enriched. Through the use of elaborate strategies, a text template is visibly linked to one's own prior knowledge, to feelings and opinions, one's own images and attitudes. Elaborative reading strategies make it easier to link text information to existing prior knowledge, for example: Before readers read a text, think about the given heading. Then they try to find new headings for subsections and look for concrete examples of applications or counter-examples for an argument or a fact. "Even when using the elaborating strategies, text- and concept-controlled processing work together". Normally, after the Elaborative Reading Strategies have been processed, there is more on the text page than before, but this is not an extraordinary burden on the reading content, but rather a text-related addition to information processing, which is an advantage. "It has a beneficial effect on understanding and retention".

Elaborative reading strategies go beyond the text surface. The text content is not reduced, but enriched. "By applying elaborative strategies, a text template is visibly linked to one's own prior knowledge, feelings and opinions, own images and attitudes". The connection of the text information with the existing prior knowledge is facilitated by elaborative reading strategies, for example: Before readers read a text, they think about the given headline. Then they try to find new headlines for sub-sections and concrete application or counter-examples for an argument or a fact. "Text- and concept-driven processing processes also work together when using elaborative strategies". Normally, there is more on the text side after processing the elaborative reading strategies than before, but this is not an extraordinary burden for the reading content, but a text-related addition for information processing, which is an advantage. "It has a positive effect on understanding and retention".

The following strategies prove to be useful for applying the elaborative reading strategies:

Vor der Lektüre eigenständig formulierte Fragen oder Voraussagen über den Textinhalt/den Textverlauf während bzw. nach der Lektüre beantworten (z.B. nach dem Schema: 1. Das war neu für mich 2. Das wusste ich schon 3. Das verstehe ich nicht 4. Das möchte ich fragen 5. Darüber möchte ich sprechen; vgl. Müller & Roebbell 2004).

Textstellen oder Textabläufe visualisieren: als mentale Beschreibung (Versuche, Dir den zeitlichen Ablauf der geschilderten Ereignisse bildlich vorzustellen; Stelle Dir den im Text beschriebenen Gegenstand so genau wie möglich vor) und/oder als graphische Illustration (Zeichne den im Text beschriebenen Gegenstand auf; Gebe den Ablauf des Textes in Form einer Bildergeschichte wieder)

Gezielt persönliche Assoziationen initiieren: (Welche Textstelle können mit persönlichen Erlebnissen und Erfahrungen verbunden werden? Für welche Sachverhalte können persönliche Beispiele gefunden werden?)

One can learn to read. A strategy-oriented teaching program is very effective in systematically imparting and guided practice of those skills and knowledge. A good reading strategy can facilitate text comprehension. "All strategy-oriented programs have in common that reading comprehension is promoted by the explicit teaching and model-like practice of reading strategies". Based on the reading theory of Gold (2007), some reading strategies are listed and analyzed. The elaborative reading strategy proves to be particularly helpful and applicable. The presentation and analysis of this strategy are further deepened and optimized in this chapter.

"Among the elaborative inferences distinguished in the literature are: instruments, general concepts and consequences of events". In the reading process, there are two inferences, namely the forward inference and the backward inference.

Sanford/Garrod (1981) gave a pair of sentences for the forward inference as an example. "Sentence 1. Mary dressed the baby. Sentence 2. The clothes were made of pink wood.". Before analyzing this example, a new term, namely lexical decomposition, is first explained: This means that "a lexeme is broken down into its semantic components". This term is also called lexical breakdown or decomposability and decomposition (in English) translated. "The term decomposition, which was coined mainly by Gibbs and which is sometimes also referred to as decomposability by other authors.

The term lexical decomposition means that decomposability refers to the analyzability of sentences or contexts, i.e. to the assumptions of speakers about the extent to which the meanings of the individual constituents of a sentence or context contribute to the figurative overall meaning. This function is used to analyze the two sentences mentioned above.

According to the logic of forward inference, the inference between the two sentences should be drawn before reading the second sentence, "since it is already built into the underlying conceptualization of attract". Sentence 1. Mary dressed the baby. Sentence 2. The clothes were made of pink wood. If clothes in sentence 1. is already presented as part of the decomposition of the verb, readers can generate the forward inference. If lexical decomposition has not taken place, then the additional backward inference is required. In this case, the reading time is increased. Readers want to complete the reading task effectively and save reading time during the reading process.

But unlike this idea, elaborative inferences can also occur during the reading process. "A number of empirical findings suggest that elaborative inferences are made during reading when background knowledge is available and easily accessible". Elaborative inferences are based on background knowledge that can facilitate and spread the understanding of text-related information.

In Unterschied zu Inferenzen, die sich aus Beziehungen zwischen Konzepten ableiten, wie den kausalen, gibt es Inferenzen, die auf umfassenderen Wissensstrukturen wie Skripten oder mentalen Modellen beruhen. Skripte enthalten Informationen über stereotypische Situationen und Ereignisse. Das Verarbeitungsprinzip der Skripttheorie lautet: Skripte erleichtern das Verstehen von skriptbezogenen Informationen, da sie diese erwartbar machen. Insbesondere beim Geschichtenverstehen spielen Erwartungen in Bezug auf Handlungsfolgen eine wichtige Rolle.

According to Schank (1978), understanding is a top-down, expectation-driven process. In the generation of predictive expectations, world knowledge is used in text comprehension". Before the reading process, such prior knowledge can have an influence on the reading expectations. During the reading process, they can influence the information decision. After the reading process, they are a basis for the elaborative inference.

[...] dass der Leseprozess nicht nur von aktivierten Skripten bestimmt wird, sondern dass die Lesesituation, Gattungswissen und Wissen, wie Themen entfaltet und abgeändert werden können, mit hineinspielen und mögliche Fortsetzungserwartungen aufgrund von Skripten beeinflussen.

Readers do not work with the isolated pairs of sentences, but with the whole reading context. There are a number of empirical findings that support the position that inferences only occur when they are needed for coherence building and thus for understanding the text. The text difficulty and the level of comprehension are influenced by numerous text-dependent elements, such as: vocabulary, syntax, text content and coherence as well as the text length. In addition, reader-dependent factors should not be overlooked, as the age of the readers, their working memory capacity, prior knowledge, interest and reading motivation can promote or hinder the reading process. On the embedding of elaborative reading strategies: "The greater the knowledge of the reader, the more elaborative inferences are possible with a text. This means that these elaborations are highly idiosyncratic". The elaborative processing process is presented in detail in this chapter to prepare for an empirical overview of its use in practice.

The importance of elaborative processes for understanding and retaining the reading content has already been extensively presented. Elaboration was defined as enrichment and inference that go beyond the necessary level required to understand the text. Elaborations are

the result of constructive processes and expand the information available in the meaning units of the text. "If they go beyond the level required to understand the explicit text base, such enrichments are called elaborations". Readers can extract the additional content beyond the explicit text base by reading between the lines and automatically generate a large number of inferences. "Elaborative processes link the text information in various ways with prior knowledge and form the actual creative moment when reading". The more elaborations are elicited using prior knowledge, the better individual propositions are understood and remembered. Information processing leads to different traces in memory depending on depth.

The study of reading strategies is a meaningful topic, as they appear both in foreign language teaching and in everyday life. There are also numerous readings available that provide a theoretical basis. In addition, the DaF (German as a foreign language) textbooks are numerous and versatile and thus form a good basis for empirical analyses. This article aims to provide an insight into a current, relevant and complex topic. Further research in this area is expected.

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