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The FIVES Strategy

There has and continues to be much discussion and writing focused on teaching students strategies that will enable them to become independent readers (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003). But a distinction between skills and strategies needs to be clear in the minds of teachers and readers to ensure appropriately targeted instruction and effective learning. Serravallo and Goldberg (2007) define *skills* as “competencies that are applicable to all reading texts and experiences” (p. 12). Readers who can activate prior knowledge, determine main ideas and significant details, determine word meanings using context clues, efficiently decode words, draw inferences from text, retell, synthesise and visualise have developed a repertoire of reading skills.

The way – specifically, *how* – a reader performs these skills in given situations constitutes a reading *strategy* (Serravallo & Goldberg, 2007). Efficient readers select and apply multiple skills suited to a text, their level of background knowledge and intended purpose as they construct meaning. But, before that outcome can be achieved, students must be taught useful reading skills, allowed ample time for supported practice with each and be provided with models of their integration as strategies across multiple kinds of texts for authentic purposes. With the plethora of information and suggestions available, an effective, efficient and versatile protocol for teaching students skills and how to use them strategically for comprehension and word learning becomes essential. FIVES provides that protocol, integrating research-tested skills and strategies that become internalised and self-initiated by readers across genres of text and purposes for reading. Students read for academic and pragmatic purposes; we must also encourage and make time for them to read for pleasure. “Reading is both a cognitive and an emotional journey” (Miller, 2009, p. 16). Independent reading for pleasure inspires motivation to read more; persistence

with complex texts; discovery of unknown people, places and times; and the growth of empathy as readers vicariously experience events through characters in books (Miller, 2009).

The Components of FIVES

The letters of FIVES represent a competency or skill for understanding concepts, the message and vocabulary in text. They also represent making personal connections with background knowledge and experiences as well as elaborating and expanding to construct personal meaning and express it succinctly and accurately.

F stands for facts. Before readers can move to higher levels of thinking on Bloom's revised taxonomy, they need to initially acquire facts to work with – as grist for engaging in deeper levels of meaning making. The Fact level is expressed as a verb (remembering) rather than as a noun (knowledge) in the revised taxonomy (see figure 1.1); the revisions appreciate that each level involves a cognitive process performed from recalling facts to higher levels of thinking (Anderson et al., 2001). It's essential that readers recall the stated facts accurately and distinguish key ideas from significant details and interesting but non-essential ones.

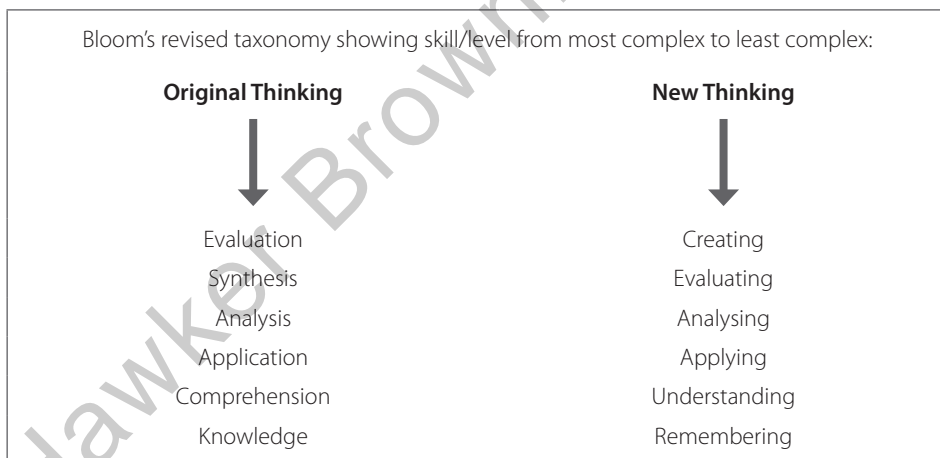


Figure 1.1: Bloom's revised taxonomy.

Adapted from.: Anderson, Krathwohl, Airasian, Cruikshank, Mayer, Pintrich, Raths & Wittrock, 2001.

I represents inferences. Readers read between the lines, adding what's in the text content (tc) to what's in their mind (background knowledge [bk] and experience [e]) to construct an inference. Thus, $I = tc + (bk + e)$ (Shea, 2012). See figure 1.2. It's important to remember and respect that life's circumstances and opportunities, friends, family, culture and school have shaped the background knowledge and experiences that students bring to a text. Although inferences are built from this

mixture, *text-based inferences* are those supported with a preponderance of information explicitly stated in the text; *knowledge-based inferences* are highly supported by readers' background knowledge and experiences as these connect to content in the text (Beers, 2003). As readers make inferences, they personalise understanding of text content (Irwin, 2007; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997).

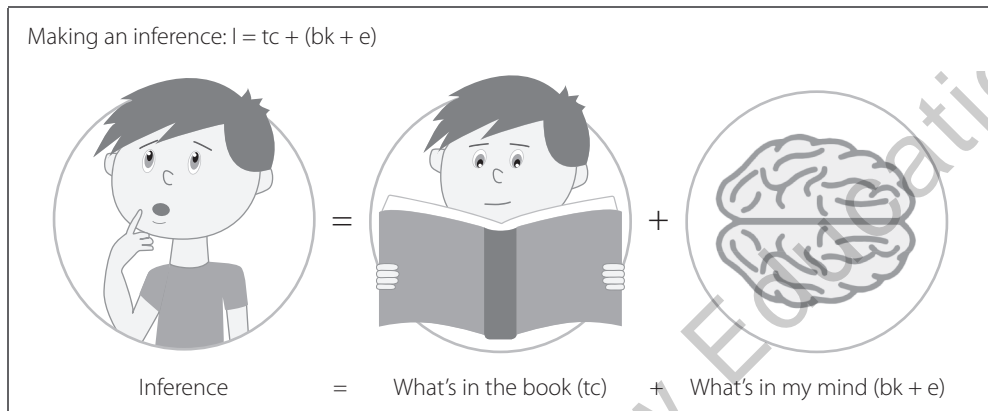


Figure 1.2: Inference formula.

V is for vocabulary. “Words are important; they have power” (Shea, 2011, p. 194). Authors use precise words to clarify their message, lessening the potential for misunderstanding. Some words may be new or unfamiliar in the context in which they’re found. It’s incumbent on the reader to fully understand words, terminology and expressions as used in the context of the text read. Students who have limited vocabularies struggle to understand year-level text, particularly informational selections. This is especially true for English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) learners, who are limited in the academic language required for navigating content area texts and instruction related to it (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2010). (Visit https://www.ntech.edu/files/teachered/edTPA_Academic-Language-Functions-toolkit.pdf for the *Academic Language Function Toolkit*, an informational and highly useful resource that includes instructional suggestions and learning activities for developing *academic language* [i.e. language specific to instructional interactions, learning activities and information or concepts across content areas] with all students in the classroom [e.g. on-level students, struggling learners, students with special needs or EAL/D learners]).

Informational (expository) text is especially replete with terminology that is topic specific. Narrative text and other genres also introduce unfamiliar words and multiple meanings for known words. In any text type, readers may come across many words that they have not previously met in print or heard in conversation. Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2002) call these *tier 2* (sophisticated synonyms for basic or *tier 1* words) and *tier 3* (domain- or content-specific) words (table 1.1, page 10).

Table 1.1: Tiers of Words

Tier 1 Words (common words most people understand)	Tier 2 Words (more sophisticated synonyms for common words or words used in new way)	Tier 3 Words (domain- or content-specific words)
small	trivial	hibernation
wild	tempestuous	manifesto
hop	bound	fibula
smart	cunning	biodegradable

E stands for experiences. Readers elaborate, expand, evaluate and make connections based on experiences (from background knowledge and life). If we went to a modern art gallery and looked at an abstract painting, we could similarly list the shapes, colours and medium observed in an abstract painting – the text content. But our interpretations would differ. The work would evoke personal emotions, memories and associations; such variations are accepted and respected. In addition, our interpretations may or may not match the painter’s intention. That doesn’t matter; once an artist, painter, author or composer publishes work, they no longer own the meaning. Meaning is negotiated between the author and audience. Audience members naturally construct personal understandings, elaborating and expanding based on logical connections with their background knowledge and lived experiences.

Every day, we unconsciously make connections with stimuli that impact our senses; it’s instinctive to interpret incoming information and connect new data to what we know or have experienced. Readers should also do this when engaged with text; simply decoding words is insufficient. Reading involves active thinking throughout the process of engaging with the text. In order to assimilate and accommodate it, readers consider how new information connects to their prior knowledge and experiences. Guiding them to think analytically, share ideas clearly and make use of their conclusions for a deeper understanding of the text content is an essential part of effective literacy instruction.

S is for summary. Shea (2012) states, “In a summary, the reader rephrases the gist of the text with a modicum of inference – or none at all” (p. 77). Readers reveal the accuracy, extent and depth of their comprehension, ability to discern main ideas and significant details, and degree of clarity in expressing what they’ve gleaned from the text. Effective summaries involve much more than merely lifting details from the text.

Summarisers select important ideas, set aside unimportant and redundant details, rephrase information, report ideas in an appropriate sequence and construct a topic sentence when the author does not provide or explicitly state one (Irwin, 2007). All of this is accomplished in a concise format, allowing readers to capsule key ideas in a way that makes remembering easier and holding them for use in higher-level thinking behaviours. It is a multi-layered, complex process that requires explicit instruction, effective modelling and authentic practice (Cohen & Cowen, 2011). Summarising becomes an ongoing metacognitive behaviour when readers self-monitor comprehension, forming brief mental summaries as they navigate through complex text. This significantly increases retention and improves overall comprehension of that text (Gunning, 2010). Readers are activated to engage in summarising as well as each of the other skills and apply them strategically and effectively by the questions or prompts they pose for themselves. Figure 1.3 shows an example of displaying a visual reminder of the components of FIVES.



Figure 1.3: Visual reminder of the components of FIVES.