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Review of *Guided Comprehension for English Learners*

McLaughlin, M. (2012) *Guided Comprehension for English Learners*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

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Reviewed by Jiani Liao
University of Georgia

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In *Guided Comprehension for English learners*, Maureen McLaughlin focuses on the introduction of the *Guided Comprehension Model for English Learners* and explains the use of the model in actual teaching scenarios. Since reading interacts with social contexts and social activities, readers are exposed to detailed, research-based, classroom-based processes for teaching reading in this book. The goal is to help teachers equip themselves to know their students and to guide their students to read actively.

This book consists of two parts. The first part, from Chapter 1 to Chapter 7, describes the Guided Comprehension Model for English learners with its research base, multiple stages, assessment connections and use of leveled texts. Chapter 1 lists several research-based points that teachers should know and obtain before and during the teaching process, including becoming familiar with students' cultural and social backgrounds, having appropriate expectations for English learners, involving English learners, presenting explicit instructions to English learners, designing programs on the base of students' first languages and knowledge, broadening the diversity of reading materials and options, offering supports on vocabulary, testing with formative assessments, and preparing teachers with ongoing professional development. Chapter 2 details ten research-based tenets of reading comprehension and the connections between these ten tenets. These tenets are like the framework of the house of reading comprehension. Each is a strong pillar, and the house cannot be complete without any of them. Chapter 3 emphasizes the importance of the context in reading, and then it delineates four stages of the model and how they function. These four stages lead English learners to the world of reading step by step. The process starts with background introductions and instructions in small-group conversations, and then moves forward into the teacher's presentation and small-group discussion, and finally ends up with teacher-facilitated whole-group reflection and goal setting. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 explicitly explain the steps of launching students' facilitation and active participation. These two chapters focus on students' creation, organization and management of comprehension centers. Chapter 6 introduces practical approaches to assessing English learners. It illustrates several factors that teachers should consider when they are designing assessments, and ways to help English learners prepare assessments and reach the required standards. The last chapter of Part One goes back to the beginning of teaching English learners reading comprehension; text selection is the main focus of this chapter. It lists the elements that motivate students, and ways to improve English learners' reading comprehension through selecting appropriate reading materials for them.

The second part of *Guided Comprehension for English Learners* includes twelve theme-based Guided Comprehension lessons. Chapter 8, Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 provide some strategies for designing lesson plans based on the previous chapters. In each of the strategies, teachers guide students to go through four stages in a lesson: engaging pre-reading sequences (teachers lead conversations with students about the background of the topic), teacher-directed whole-group instruction (teachers direct the whole group in activities), teacher-guided small group instruction (teachers break the whole class into small groups and provide guidance for group discussion), and teacher-facilitated whole-group reflection and goal setting (students become the center of the class with teachers' facilitation).

McLaughlin introduces four strategies in each of the last three chapters. The first strategy of Chapter 8, "a semantic question map," works well to preview a topic. In the semantic question

map of a topic, students answer and discuss the questions to gain some basic information of the topic (p.105). The second strategy “lyric summary” or “lyric retelling” is applied to summarize a teaching idea (p.109). In this strategy, teachers guide students to create lyrics and songs which summarize the content of the topic. Students learn how to work through the third strategy, “the concept of definition map” (p.118). In this strategy, the designer has students define a concept and share their ideas with the class, and then students summarize the two parts. The last strategy in Chapter 8 is to invite students to speak about a topic. After finishing the reading text or listening text, students are required to share their thoughts with their partners or in front of the whole class. This strategy places students at the center of learning, and it encourages them to be active learners.

The four strategies Chapter 9 are a “draw and write visualizations” strategy, “connection stems” strategy, “draw and write retellings” strategy, and “evaluate questions” strategy (p.148). The first strategy asks students to present what they read in the form of drawing and writing. The second strategy uses connection stems to relate the different parts of the reading together. Students connect different parts of the text together through the clues, and students are also encouraged to connect the text with their life experiences as a way to develop better comprehension. The second summarizing strategy in Chapter 9 is “drawing and retelling.” In this strategy, students draw and write to answer four questions: “Who is in the story?” “Where does this story happen?” “What happened in the story?” “What is the ending of the story?” (p.105). Students would discuss and develop further thinking after they finish this. The last strategy helps students examine the text by answering evaluative questions. Students are first grouped to answer given questions, and then they post their own question to the text. Through this strategy, students read the text over and over, and think about the text from different angles.

“Bio-impression,” “thick and thin questions,” “double-entry journal,” and “questions into paragraphs” are the four strategies in Chapter 10 (p.190). The “bio-impression” strategy helps teachers to preview a topic, because students write down the chronicle of a story or a person’s experience in a bio-impression. Chapter 10 introduces “writing double-entry journals” as a strategy to make connections between the text and students’ lives. The journal has two columns: “ideas from the text” and “students’ connections” (p.202). In the first column, students write down their findings of the text. In the second column, students record their personal experiences that are similar to the ones in column one. The third strategy, “thick and thin questions,” is to let students question themselves when they finish the reading. The answers to thick questions are the basic information of the text. To answer thin questions, students must deduct the answers through clues and assumptions. In this strategy, both teachers and students write down thick and thin questions, and then they solve these questions in the class. The goal of the “posting questions” strategy is to summarize the text through “questions into paragraphs” (QuIP) (p.213). Teachers post QuIP at the beginning of the lesson and introduce two resources in which students search for the answers. Students post answers based on their research in the two resources and compare the differences. Through this comparison, students can make connections between the findings from the two resources, and summarize the answers more effectively.

Other useful resources can be found in the appendices for further research or learning, including Comprehension Strategy Applications and Blacklines (p.227), Resources for Organizing and Managing Comprehension Centers and Routines (p.286), Informal Assessments (p. 325) and

Sources of Leveled Texts (p.344), Ideas for Creating Home—School Connections (p.347) and Guide Comprehension Planning forms (p.349). All the resources in the appendices are provided for readers to build their own models, with the assistance of the methods and strategies that are introduced in the book. They encourage the reader to make further steps in this field after reading this book.

The strength of the book is its clear organization and practical use in teaching reading comprehension to English learners. McLaughlin achieves her goal, integrating what she knows about teaching English learners with what she knows about teaching students how to comprehend. Readers explore and view reading comprehension from a new perspective, and put emphasis on English learners' comprehension, interests and practical language use. Readers also learn what information is needed before a reading class, how to select appropriate texts, how to support English learners, and what steps should be launched in each class and after each class.

One limitation of this book is that the author didn't encourage her readers to make changes to the strategies and models included. The author should give some suggestions about how readers could modify the strategies and models to cope with the readers' teaching situations. However, the book gives many practical examples of teaching reading comprehension to English learners. Readers will learn to explore and view reading comprehension from a new perspective and put emphasis on English learners' interests and practical language use.

References

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About the Reviewer

Jiani Liao is a first-year MAT student in Teaching English as a Second Language at The University of Georgia.