

Reading Skills: Taught, not caught!

T.W.G.Hs Lo Yu Chik Primary School

Presenters:

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School Background

- located in Yau Mei Tai
- most students lack parental support in English learning
- TSA results : room for improvement, especially in reading
- Most KS2 students performed unsatisfactorily in reading skills (e.g. identifying the main idea, finding word meaning in context, making inferences)



Skills-based vs Text-based Approach

Text-based Approach

- The text itself is the lesson focus.
- “Students try to understand it as fully as necessary, using all the skills they have acquired.”

(Nuttall, 1996)



Skills-based vs Text-based Approach

Skills-based Approach

- Focus on a discrete skill
- “A number of texts may be used, each offering opportunities to practise the skill.”
- “Other aspects of the texts will not be dealt with unless they contribute to the specific objective of the lesson.” (Nuttall, 1996)



Integrated Approach (Skills-based + Text-based)

Why is an integrated approach necessary?

Students' needs

Despite vocabulary development, Ss need **systematic, explicit** teaching of reading skills, so that they are able to acquire the more subtle high-order reading skills, and **integrate** and **transfer** the learned skills in new contexts.



School-based Reading Curriculum Framework

Based on:

- the reading strategies outlined in CG
- the reading skills introduced to teachers in PD programmes
- the reading skills assessed in TSA



School-based Reading Curriculum Framework

Concepts involved:

Gradation *'Simple' skills are first taught, then less direct ones.*

Recycling *Taught skills are consolidated as students move on to higher year levels*

Integration *Reading skills are integrated into the GE programme.*

Progression *Skills not taught are pointers for future teaching.*



Support for teachers

- Samples of questions related to the reading skills
- Resource materials
 - SRA Specific Skills Series
 - Real Easy Reading Series
 - Comprehension Strategies



Principle of materials design

- Integrate reading skills into the GE Programme
 - Develop sequences of **short, theme-based worksheets** (Text 1-5), each sharing the same theme as that of the textbook unit
 - Ensure students have **prior knowledge** of the theme and language involved
 - Lessen the burden of unfamiliar vocabulary whilst reading



Principle of materials design

- Focus on particular reading skills

P.3 Finding the main idea

P.4 Finding the main idea

Finding word meaning in context

Pronoun referencing

P.5 Finding the main idea

Finding word meaning in context

Making inferences



Principle of materials design

- Each sequence of worksheets (Text 1-5)
[App. A1-A3]
 - Enable students to practise the same skills several times at one shot
 - Follow the same format in question design, to free students from problem understanding the rubrics.
 - Use multiple choice: Controlled options to prompt students' answers, and to facilitate their discussion and scoring.



Principle of lesson design: 3-P Model

**Stage 1:
Present**

**Stage 2:
Practise**

**Stage 3:
Produce/
Master**



1. Present

T use **think-aloud method** to demonstrate the working steps and the thinking process

2. Practice

Ss work in groups, **model** on the working steps and the thinking process



3. Produce/Master

- Ss work independently to **practise** the working steps and the thinking process
- T give feedback on whether Ss have mastered the skill or not (assessment for learning)

Three balloons (green, blue, and purple) are positioned on the left side of the slide. Each balloon has a string and several small yellow triangular flags attached to it. The balloons are partially cut off by the left edge of the frame.

P3 Reading Lessons: Using Skills-based Approach

Relationship of Textbook and reading materials

	Textbook	Reading WS (Text 1-5)
Vocab. related to:	Chinese New Year, Christmas, Mid-Autumn Festival, Dragon Boat Festival	Chinese New Year, Christmas, Doll's Day, Children's Day, 7-5-3 Festival
Text type	Expository Postcard	Expository Diary
Concept	Festivals and celebrations: what people do and eat on special day	Same schema

Focused skill:
Finding the main idea



Background

- a class of high achievers
- a double lesson
- Students have just learned Unit 1 “Festivals and Celebrations” (postcard & expository)
- Students have little previous experience of explaining their thoughts
- The school has encouraged teachers to use co-operative learning strategies in their teaching



Teaching Procedures

Stage 1: Presentation

1. Teacher introduced and explained the phrase “*the main idea*”
2. Teacher introduced the topic of the reading text (Text 1: Chinese New Year [App. B1]), brainstorming the ideas related to the text



3. Teacher read aloud the text

4. Teacher demonstrated the working steps and thinking process (**Think Aloud**):

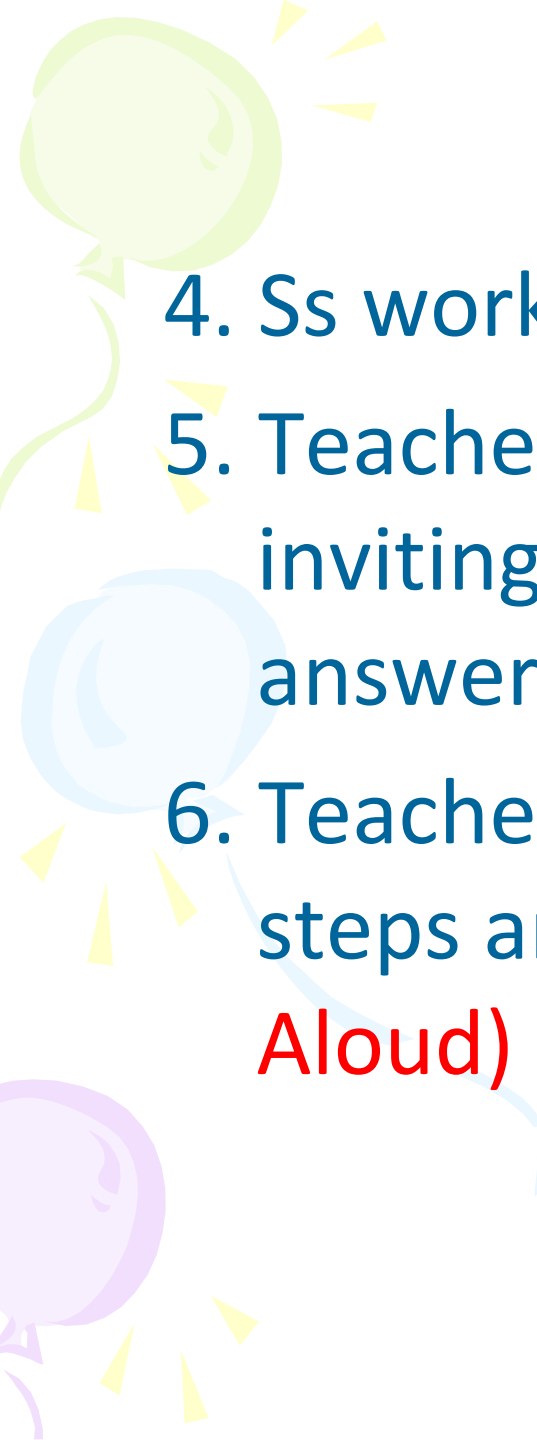
- Read each distracter (A,B,C,D)
- Locate the idea in the text
- Count the number of ideas in each distracter



Stage 2: Practice

- Teacher introduced another text (Text 2: Children's Day [App. B2]) and brainstorm ideas
- Teacher shared-read the text with Ss
- Teacher asked questions whilst reading to check Ss' comprehension



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4. Ss worked in pairs, then groups
 5. Teacher used 'Think-Pair-Share',
inviting each group to explain the
answer
 6. Teacher demonstrated the working
steps and thinking process (Think
Aloud) once again



Stage 3: Production

1. Teacher introduced another text (Text 3: Christmas [App. B3])
2. Teacher shared read the text with Ss
3. Ss practised the skill independently
4. Teacher monitored to assist individuals and assess Ss' understanding

Teaching Sequence

Stage 3: Produce/ Master

Text 3 (Christmas)
Ss work
independently to
practise the skill

Feedback on
teaching
and learning

Stage 2: Practise

Text 2 (Children's Day)
Ss work in groups
to practise the
working steps and
thinking process

Stage 1: Present

Text 1 (Chinese New Year)
T demonstrate the
working steps and
thinking process



P.3 Students' Performance

Student A chose the correct answer, but he failed to elaborate on his answer. He just repeated the taught phrase (*there are many important ideas*).





P.3 Students' Performance

Student B chose the correct answer. He was able to elaborate on his answer. He summarized the text in his own words (*children do many things*), though he was a bit hesitant.





P.3 Students' Performance

Student C's performance was the same as Student B. She was able to summarize the text in her own words (*children do many things*) and she was much more confident.



Text 1: Chinese New Year

(source: Textbook – Step Up)

Now, at Chinese New Year, people put red paper on doors and walls. They wear new clothes and visit friends. Children get red packets. People watch lion dances and fireworks. They greet their friends and say 'Kung Hey Fat Choy'.

What is the main idea of the text?

- A. Chinese people wear new clothes and visit friends at Chinese New Year.
- B. Chinese people greet their friends and say 'Kung Hey Fat Choy' at Chinese New Year.
- C. It tells us what Chinese people do at Chinese New Year.
- D. Chinese people get red packets at Chinese New Year.

Text 2: Children's Day

In Japan, there is a festival called Children's Day. It is a festival for children in May. On Children's Day, children do not go to school. They eat rice cake. They can play all day. Families with boys hang carp kites outside their houses. With carp kites, fathers and mothers hope that their boys can be strong and brave.

What is the main idea of the text?

- A. Children's Day is a festival for boys and girls.
- B. it is about what Japanese children and families do on Children's Day.
- C. Japanese children can play all day on Children's Day.
- D. it is about the carp kites hung on Children's Day.

Text 3: Christmas

25th December 2009

Today was Christmas. I got up early. First I put on my beautiful dress. Then I helped Mum make Christmas cake. My friends came to visit me. We played games and sang songs. We ate Christmas cake and chicken wings. We had Christmas gifts for one another. We had a happy day.

What is the main idea of the text?

- A. it was Christmas time.
- B. Mary had a happy time on Christmas Day.
- C. Mary's friends came to visit Mary.
- D. Mary helped Mum make Christmas cake.



Teacher's Reflection

1. Based on teacher's performance
 - Scaffolding – support students' comprehension
2. Based on students' performance
 - Consolidation – showing the thinking process explicitly



Teacher's Reflection

3. Skills-based approach

- thinking process made explicit
- complementary teaching approach

Three balloons (green, blue, and purple) are positioned on the left side of the slide. Each balloon has a string and several small yellow triangular flags attached to it. The balloons are partially cut off by the left edge of the frame.

P4 Reading Lessons: Using Skills-based Approach



Background

- a class of 36 high achievers
- a double lesson
- Students have just learned Unit 1 “A birthday dinner for Puffy” (Narrative)
- Students, especially the boys, have strong will to share their thoughts
- Students are quite used to this kind of think-aloud way of teaching and learning, hence faster teaching pace.

Relationship of Textbook and Reading materials

	Textbook	Reading WS (Text 1-5)
Vocab. related to:	Puffy's birthday party	birthday parties and celebrations
Text type	Narrative	Narrative
Concept	What a family do to celebrate a special day like birthday	Same schema: a recount of a special day

Focused skills:

1. Finding the main idea
2. Finding word meaning in context
3. Pronoun referencing

Teaching Sequence

Stage 3: Produce/ Master

Text 4-5
Ss work
independently to
practise the skills

Stage 2: Practise

Text 2-3

Clarify Ss' concept on
main ideas

Ss, in groups, practise
the working steps and
thinking process

Stage 1: Present

Text 1

Ss work in pairs.
T demonstrate the working
steps and thinking process
afterwards

Feedback on
teaching
and learning



Text 1: Sally's Birthday [App. A1]

Today is Sally's birthday. The children are having a party at a KFC restaurant. They like the restaurant because they often have afternoon tea and chat there. They talk about their teachers and classmates. The children order a lot of fried chicken. Sally eats a lot. She is a meat lover! After dinner, they eat a homemade birthday cake. Jenny's mother makes it the day before. She is a skillful cook! The children have a birthday gift for Sally, too. It is her favorite comic book. Sally has a great day. She says 'Thank you!' to her friends.

1. What is the main idea of the text?

The text tells that ...

- A. today is Sally's birthday.
- B. Sally eats a lot of fried chicken because she is a meat lover.
- C. the KFC restaurant is a good place for having the birthday party.
- D. Sally feels happy on her birthday.



2. The word 'chat' (line 2) means _____.

A. talk

B. play games

C. delicious

D. dance

3. The word 'homemade' (line 6) means the birthday cake is _____.

A. made at home

B. made by Sally

C. bought from a shop

D. made of chocolate



4. Read line 7: *She is a skillful cook!* The word 'she' refers to _____.

A. Sally

B. Jenny

C. Jenny's mother

D. a friend of Sally

Text 2: New Year's Day [App. A2]

It is the New Year's Day. The Lee family is having a buffet dinner in a hotel. They are excited because they can choose the food they like. Mum likes Japanese food because sushi and sashimi taste fresh. Dad likes eating chicken curry. It makes him feel warm in winter. Kitty eats a lot of Italian food because she likes pasta and pizza. John eats desserts only. He thinks cakes, jelly and ice cream are the most delicious. All of them are full and happy.

1. What is the main idea of the text?

The text tells that...

- A. the family is having a buffet dinner on the New Year's Day.
- B. the family enjoys the buffet dinner because they can eat their favourite food.
- C. the children can eat pizza and ice cream.
- D. the family members like different kinds of food.

2. The word 'desserts' (line 6) means _____.

- A. cold food
- B. food for children
- C. yummy food
- D. sweet food

3. Read line 4: *It makes him feel warm in winter.* The word 'it' refers to _____.

- A. the dinner
- B. the chicken curry
- C. Japanese food
- D. the hot pot

4. Read line 7: *All of them are full and happy.* 'All of them' refer to _____.

- A. the Lee family
- B. Mr. Lee
- C. the two children
- D. Dad and Mum



P.4 Group Discussion

This is a mixed ability group. Students tried hard to clarify one's own ideas and exchanged views.



Text 3: Tom's Birthday [App. A3]

It is little Tom's fifth birthday. Cindy takes Tom to a cake shop because he wants a big birthday cake. Tom chooses a cream cake with fresh fruit. It looks colourful.

When Cindy pays for the cake, she asks the shopkeeper to give her five candles. Tom wants to have five more. 'Why do you want ten candles?' asks Cindy. 'Oh, one candle is one wish,' says Tom smartly. 'When I blow out ten candles, I can have ten wishes come true! It's great!'

What is the main idea of the text?

The text tells that ...

- A. Cindy buys a birthday cake for little Tom.
- B. Cindy gets ten candles from the shop.
- C. Tom likes blowing out candles.
- D. Tom has a lot of birthday wishes.

2. The word 'chooses' (line 2) means _____.

- A. buys
- B. picks
- C. cooks
- D. eats

3. The word 'smartly' (line 7) suggests that Tom is _____.

- A. clever
- B. lazy
- C. hungry
- D. unhappy

4. Read line 5: *Why do you want ten candles?*

The word '*you*' refers to _____.

- A. Cindy
- B. the shopkeeper
- C. Tom
- D. a customer



Teacher's Reflection

Procedures that promote learning:

- Provide scaffolding to help Ss interpret the texts by
 - Probing
 - Modelling
 - Clarifying
- Utilize oral interaction (from T-Ss in class to Ss–Ss in group work)



**Giving
explicit
instruction**



Teacher's Reflection

Procedures that promote learning:

- Train Ss the vital skill of interrogating texts (i.e. 'Text talk')

Room for improvement

- Need to enliven the motivation stage

Three balloons (green, blue, and purple) are positioned on the left side of the slide. Each balloon has a string and several small yellow triangular flags attached to it. The balloons are partially cut off by the left edge of the frame.

P.5 Reading Lessons: Using Skills-based Approach

Background

- a class of high achievers
 - motivated to learn English
 - Ss have lots of chances to practise oral skill, both inside and outside classroom (English ambassadors, Reading Buddy)
 - Ss have just finished Unit 1 “A Young Hero: Terry Fox” (Biography)
 - Teacher always assigns extended tasks to Ss.
- In this module, Ss were asked to do research on a famous person they were interested in (preparing for Pair Talk)
- a double lesson

Relationship of Textbook and Reading materials

	Textbook	Reading WS (Text 1-5)
Vocab. related to:	Terry Fox- A Young Hero	Heroes or famous people
Text type	Biography	Biography
Concept	Achievements and characteristics of famous people	Same schema: life history of famous people

Focused skills:

1. Finding the main idea
2. Finding word meaning in context
3. Making inferences

Teaching Sequence

Stage 3: Produce/ Master

Text 4-5
Ss work
independently to
practise the skill

Stage 2: Practise

Text 2-3 (Yao Ming)
Ss work in pairs to practise
the working steps and
thinking process

Stage 1: Present

Text 1 (F. Nightingale)
Use Pair Talk and Individual
presentation as lead-in.
Read aloud & Silent Reading
Ss work in groups of 4. Teacher led the
whole class discussion to demonstrate
the working steps and thinking process

Feedback
on
teaching
and
learning

Text 1: The Story of F. Nightingale [App.C1]

Florence Nightingale was born on 12th May 1820 in Italy. She came from a rich family. When she was small, she often got sick. During her visits to hospitals, she cared about the sick people. Since then, she wanted to become a nurse.

In 1854, she began to look after sick and injured soldiers in wars. With her help, many soldiers survived. After that, she set up a school to train nurses and to make hospitals better.

Nightingale was the mother of modern nursing. She helped to change nursing into a profession. Nurses became people with special skills and knowledge. She was awarded the Royal Red Cross in 1883.

She passed away at the age of 90 on 13th August 1910. She was named 'The Lady with the Lamp'. She was kind and smart, so people

1. What is the main idea of the text?

The text tells that Florence Nightingale ...

- A. helped a lot of people by starting nursing schools.
- B. wanted to become a nurse when she was small.
- C. looked after injured soldiers in wars.
- D. lived to an old age.



2. The word 'train' (line 5) means _____.

- A. to look after
- B. to teach
- C. to build schools for
- D. to go by train

3. Read line 6. The word 'survived' (line 5) means the soldiers _____.

- A. were badly hurt
- B. won the war
- C. did not die
- D. had to cut off their legs

4. 'People with special skills or knowledge' are in _____?

- A. a profession
- B. a club
- C. a special school
- D. a war

5. The name 'Lady with the Lamp' probably suggests that Florence Nightingale _____.

- A. liked to carry a lamp
- B. looked after sick people day and night
- C. only looked after people at night
- D. always worked in the dark

Text 1: Question No 3

3. Read line 6. The word ‘survived’ (line 5) means the soldiers _____.

A. were badly hurt

B. won the war

C. did not die

D. had to cut off their legs

In 1854, she began to look after sick and injured soldiers in wars. With her help, many soldiers survived. After that, she set up a school to train nurses and to make hospitals better.

Focused skills:

- Finding word meaning in context

P.5 Students' Performance (Question No 3)

A summary of reading skills used by different groups:
(Intended reading skill: Guessing word meaning in context).

Group 4: Work out the answer by elimination



Group 6: Use contextual clue 'look after sick' to work out the answer

Group 7: Use contextual clue 'With her help' to work out the answer



Group 8: Recognize familiar word



Teacher's Feedback as Input (Explicit teaching) (Question No 3)

- Tell students the answer
- Remind the class the strategy (contextual clues) used by some groups to get the answer

Room for Improvement

Teacher may point out explicitly that option A ‘*were badly hurt*’ does not make sense in the sentence “*With her help, many soldiers survived.*”





Text 1: Question No 5

5. The name ‘Lady with the Lamp’ probably suggests that Florence Nightingale _____.

- A. liked to carry a lamp
- B. looked after sick people day and night
- C. only looked after people at night
- D. always worked in the dark

Focused skills:
Making inferences

P.5 Students' Performance and Teacher's feedback (Question No 5)

Summary of reading skills used by different groups:
(Intended reading skill: Making inferences).

Group 2: Refer to contextual clue 'she began to look after sick and injured soldiers' (line 4)



Group 5: Use picture



assist reading



Group 6: Work out the answer by elimination



Group 9: Refer to contextual clue 'she cared about the sick people' (line 2)





Teacher's Feedback (Question No 5)

Teacher's Feedback

- Tell students the answer
- Elaborate on the connection between the two ideas (look after sick people at night and carry a lamp)

Room for Improvement

- Draw students' attention to the word "suggests" in the rubrics (imply indirect meaning)



Text 2: The Story of Yao Ming [App.C2]

Yao Ming is a successful Chinese basketball player. He was born on 12th September 1980 in Shanghai. Yao is 2.29 metres tall. His parents are over 1.9 metres tall. They have very good basketball skills. Yao started playing basketball when he was nine.

In 1993, Yao joined and played for the Shanghai Sharks in China. Later he played for the Chinese Basketball Association for five years. Now he plays centre for the Houston Rockets in the NBA.

Yao was an NBA All-Star selection five times because of his

1. What is the main idea of this text?

The text tells that ...

- A. Yao Ming and his parents are very good at playing basketball.
- B. Yao Ming has joined both the Chinese and the USA basketball teams.
- C. Yao Ming is both a successful basketball player and a kind man.
- D. All Chinese basketball players should learn from Yao Ming.

2. The word ‘outstanding’ (line 8) means _____.

- A. very good B. average
C. Good D. very bad

3. 'Shanghai Sharks' and 'Houston Rockets' are _____.

- A. Yao Ming's friends B. basketball teams
C. names of basketball competitions
D. basketball games

4. Paragraph 1 suggests that _____.

- A. Yao Ming's parents are shorter than him.
- B. Yao Ming became a basketball player at a young age.
- C. Yao Ming is from Shanghai.
- D. Yao Ming's parents taught him how to play basketball.

P.5 Pair Work

This is a mixed ability pair. Students demonstrated the following skills or strategies:

Global strategy: work from *specific* questions to *global* questions (started from Q. 2 & 3 then Q. 4 & 1)

Reading skill:

- use evidence from the text to support own reasoning
- work out the answers by elimination

Communication skill:

- learn to be an active listener and interact with others in polite manners (social skill, important element of cooperative learning strategy)





Teacher's Reflection

It is important:

- to integrate language skills and to give students a purpose to read
- to provide complete feedback
(e.g. by probing why Ss got the wrong answers and by summarizing the skills used by Ss)
- to internalize skills, using a range of texts for future skill practice and reinforcement



Positive Results

1. Provide more practice for students (P.3-5)
2. Enhance Ss awareness and ability of interacting with texts, and build Ss confidence as independent readers
3. Enhance the teachers' involvement in material design and lesson planning



Positive Results

4. Provide a framework of teaching and assessment

5. Develop teachers professionally

- apply their knowledge gained in PD programmes;
- have a better understanding of the factors leading to SS performance
- apply Cooperative Learning strategies in English classrooms



Ways to explore skills-based teaching

- Cater for students' ability differences:
 - Assign fewer texts to less able classes.
 - Adapt texts for less able KS2 classes.
 - Allow text talks conducted in Chinese.
- Make reading lessons more purposeful and the class livelier.
- Expand text contents and language use.



Conclusion

- Build resources to increase Ss' exposure to tailor-made thematic materials and practice in reading skills
- Discern the role of teaching reading skills in the curriculum