

UNIT STRUCTURE

Teaching How to Identify main idea/grammatically correct sentences

CLASS – VII

Unit Overview	Rationale	Unit Outcomes				Methodology Support					Additional Reading		
		Learning Outcomes	Learning Gaps to be addressed	Related Lessons	Unit Objectives	Introduction	Case Study 1	Activity 1	Case Study 2	Activity 2		Summary	Suggested Questions
<p>Overview of the language skill</p> <p>What the Gunotsav assessment shows us</p>		<p>LO 7.09: identifies details, characters, main idea and sequence of ideas and events in a textual/ non textual material</p>	<p>Identify main ideas.</p>	<p>Unit-6 Expert Detectives. Mystery of the Talking Fan.</p> <p>Unit-7. The Invention of Vita-Wonk. Dad and the Cat and the Tree.</p>	<p>In this unit you will know about ways of helping learners to-</p> <p>(a) plan activities to help the learners to identify details and main idea and details in a paragraph of their text.</p> <p>(b) help the learners to find out the main idea and details in a picture.</p>	<p>What this unit will teach you.</p>	<p>Identify main idea and details in a paragraph.</p>	<p>Helping learners to identify the main idea and details in a paragraph.</p>	<p>Put the learners' ideas in words and sentences on a given topic.</p>	<p>Helping the learners to find out main idea and details from a picture and a paragraph by enriching and underlining the details.</p>	<p>What you learnt in this unit.</p>	<p>Sample Question : 1. Read each sentence below and circle or underline the word/ words that contain the main idea and other details.</p>	<p>⇒ www.tessindia.edu.in, https://www.speechhand.languagelinks.com</p>

Overview

The unit discusses strategies and activities that you can use in the classroom to help your students identify the main idea and other details in a paragraph. In this unit, here are two case studies, two activities, a few questions and further scope for thinking. These are expected to give you ideas to make your students read a text with more comprehension and become confident in expression through speaking and writing.

Rationale

The results of Gunotsav 2017 reveal that students of Class VII struggle to identify the main idea of a passage. The habit of reading for comprehension needs to be developed, so that they are able to identify the main idea and other supporting details in a paragraph. This unit will help you to remedy the learning gaps of the learners while reading.

Introduction

By the time students are in Class VII, they are expected to be able to read longer English texts such as chapters from novels, short stories, poems, short plays and essays on various topics. All this is meant to prepare them to read English with adequate comprehension outside the classroom, for both information and pleasure. Reading a text efficiently involves being able to identify the main idea(s) of the text, and all the other details that support the main idea(s). Like us, our students already use comprehension strategies while reading in their own language. As English teachers, our job is to draw their attention to these strategies and help them transfer them to reading English texts. This

would motivate them to read longer texts with confidence and speed. This would also help them answer comprehension questions on the lessons easily.

In this unit we will read about two teachers who tried out different activities to develop their students' reading comprehension skills. We will also read two activities that you can try out with your students. Through regular practice, your students will develop the confidence to read on their own and identify main ideas and supporting details in English texts.

Unit Objectives

In this unit you will read ways of helping learners to:

- ★ identify details and main idea in a paragraph from their text
- ★ using resources like a picture to make students practise identifying main ideas and supporting details

Case study 1 : Identifying main idea and other details in a paragraph

Mrs. Runu Swargiary teaches English in Class VII. While teaching the lesson Expert Detectives she realized her students were having trouble understanding the first few paragraphs. They were unable to locate the main idea and other details of the paragraphs. She also observed that her students were not writing appropriately because they did not understand the main idea of the lesson.

Runu thought of a way to help the students understand the main idea in a paragraph, which is the central point that an author tries to get across to the reader. The other details support the main idea and describe it. She also wanted them to learn that the main idea is often the first sentence of the paragraph.

Runu prepared some questions that would direct them to the main idea:

- ★ Who is the man Nishad is talking about?
- ★ Why are Nishad and Maya so curious about Mr. Nath?

Runu also made the students read the 'Before you read' section because it would help them understand the main idea of the paragraphs and the lesson. Runu also made the students to read the paragraph again and again until they were able to guess the correct answers. They started to find out the answers to the questions, and Runu asked them to tell her the sentences where they found the answers. Then she asked them to read the first sentence again and guess what the word 'monster' might mean. It was interesting to see students coming up with different guesses: a bad man, a thief, a criminal etc. It showed that they were getting the gist of the lesson. Students were now able to understand the main idea and the details which supported the main idea.

In this way, by looking into the organization of the paragraph, and especially the first sentence of the paragraph, students were able to identify the main idea. They also learnt to take help of the details that followed the first sentence to understand the main idea. Framing questions also helped Runu to make her learners to find out the main idea. From there on she focused on how to help her students identify the main idea and the supporting details. This helped her learners to understand the lesson very easily.

Let's stop and think

- ★ Why did Mrs Swargiary feel that it was important to teach students to identify the main idea of a passage?
- ★ Runu believes that asking questions before students read a paragraph is very important. Did this strategy help her students to find the main idea of the paragraph? Would a similar strategy help your students?
- ★ Do you think that other details in the paragraph helped the learners to identify the main idea in it?

Activity 1 : Helping learners to identify the main idea of a variety of texts

Collect a few short passages containing various kinds of writing, such as

1. a new item, from the children's section of a local English newspaper like The Assam Tribune, The Telegraph, The Sentinel or The North East Times
2. a description of a place of tourist attraction, from a magazine or from the internet
3. a recipe of any common food item, from a recipe book, or the cookery section of a newspaper or magazine, or from the internet
4. a biographical paragraph on a popular sports person, such as Hima Das, from the newspapers or from the internet
5. a passage on an endangered animal like the rhinoceros, from a magazine or from the internet
6. an adventure story, from a story book (you will also find lots of stories on the internet), and so on.

Prepare a set of questions on them that you can put up on the blackboard, such as

- ★ What or who is this passage about?
- ★ What are the most interesting things you read about in the passage?
- ★ Are there any new words you found in the passage? Can you guess their meaning?
- ★ Is there anything you did not like about what you read?

Now divide students into as many groups as the number of passages you have collected, and give one passage to each group. Give them about 15 minutes to read their passage, discuss it among themselves and find the answers to the questions on the blackboard. Encourage one student in each group to read the passage aloud to the group mates; this will help them develop their pronunciation and listening skills as well. When the groups are reading and discussing their passages, do go around the class and help them with any difficult word or phrase, if needed. Remember not to explain the passage - it is their job to try to understand it themselves. Let them struggle with it - you can help them understand the meaning of the passage during the question-answer feedback time.

When the time is up, ask each group to answer the questions on the board orally, so that other groups can get an idea of what their passage contained. You can give them five extra minutes if you want, but it is good to stick to a time limit, as this helps students practice reading English at a normal speed. Allow other groups to ask questions if they want to know more about the passage. If there are any new words, put them up on one side of the blackboard, and get the class to guess their meaning. Later, you can make them do a dictionary exercise on these words.

For the rest of the class time, make groups exchange their passages, so that every student gets to read all the passages. If necessary let them complete the reading and discussion in the next class. Once they are familiar with different kinds of written texts, they will find it easier to read their lessons and answer comprehension questions on them. At the end of the class, make the students notice the importance of asking questions before reading a text. Tell them to keep such questions in mind every time they read a new lesson or something in English outside the class.

Let's stop and think

- ★ What are the advantages and disadvantages of group reading? Will your students enjoy reading in groups?
- ★ Why is preparing a set of comprehension questions on the main idea of a passage a good strategy to develop reading comprehension skills of your students?

Case Study 2: Mrs Mina Singha helps the learners to identify the topic sentence in a text

'A paragraph is a number of sentences grouped together and relating to one topic; or, a group of related sentences that develop a single idea.'(High School English Grammar and Composition, Wren and Martin).

Mrs Mina Singha teaches English in Class VII of Borguri M.E. School. She finds this quote from Wren and Martin's grammar book very inspiring, and uses it to help her students understand paragraph

organization through some activities. She knows that a well organized paragraph always has a single main idea which is known as the topic sentence. Usually the first sentence of a paragraph is the topic sentence.

"I felt the need of helping my learners to find the topic sentence in a paragraph, so that they understood the main idea of the passage they had to read. I also wanted them to see how the other sentences in a paragraph support the topic sentence. I felt that by making students work on short passages, I could help them notice the topic sentence and supporting ideas.

One evening at home, I selected a paragraph of ten sentences written in simple English from a newspaper to prepare an activity for my students. I numbered the sentences from 1 to 10, and then in my notebook, I rewrote the paragraph, jumbling up the sentences. The next day in class, I announced to the students that they would be playing a reading game. Students get excited when we use the word 'game', so everyone listened attentively. I told them I would write down ten sentences on the board, and they should all copy them down in their notebooks. The sentences were about a paragraph on Hima Das, the young gold medallist from Assam, but they were not in the correct order. Discussing with their bench mates, they had to work out the correct order and rewrite the paragraph in their notebooks.

The students did the activity very enthusiastically, and all students were involved in the work. When they finished, I asked them to tell me what the paragraph was about, and in which sentence they found the main idea of the paragraph. Most students were able to identify the main idea, and were able to say that the first sentence carried the main idea. I was very happy that I had elicited the answer from them rather than giving it to them, which is what my colleagues and I usually do. I was happy to discover that if given a chance, students can comprehend English texts and even locate the topic sentence of a passage.

I put up the terms 'Topic Sentence' and 'Supporting Sentences' on the blackboard and explained that the first sentence of this paragraph was the topic sentence as it contained the main idea, and the other sentences were the supporting sentences, as they gave more information on the topic. Then I made them copy these terms in their notebooks, and write down the sentences under each term.

The next day, when I started a new lesson, I made the students read sections by themselves and identify the topic sentence in each section. It was not an easy task, but gradually, over several class periods, students began developing the habit of reading by themselves. Being able to identify the topic sentence and supporting sentences made them better readers, and also developed their vocabulary and reading speed.

Let's stop and think

- ★ Do you think Mrs Singha's activity - looking for the topic sentence - can help learners to identify details, characters, sequence of ideas and events in a paragraph, in addition to identifying the topic sentence?
- ★ Would your students be able to do a similar activity? What other kinds of support - pictures, diagrams etc. can help them comprehend a text?

Activity 2 : Using pictures and simple sentences to elicit the main ideas of a text

As the learning outcomes for Class VII specify, at this stage the learners need to be able to identify details, characters, main idea and sequence of ideas and events in textual/ non textual material. Teaching students to underline or circle the words/phrases/clauses in sentences is a good way to familiarize them with the idea of a topic sentence and help them locate the main idea of a text. In this activity, you will be able to help your students learn to identify the main idea of a text by using strategies like underlining and circling.

You can start with a simple activity such as showing them a picture of an object or a scenery and asking what the picture is about (i.e. the theme of the picture). Encourage students to say what things in the picture helped them to decide the theme, and circle them. Next, show the students a slightly different and more complex picture such as a picture of a kitchen, and ask them to identify the details of the picture. Explain that just as we understand a picture by finding its theme and details, we can identify the theme and supporting details of a passage through certain words or phrases.



To explain this, write a sentence on the blackboard 'This girl is very beautiful.' Ask the students to circle the word/ words that help them understand the main idea of the sentence. Through their feedback, help them identify the phrases 'this girl' and 'very beautiful' as the main idea. Follow this up by giving them a short paragraph, such as the example below, and asking them to identify the most important sentence and underline it. During the discussion, make them circle the words/phrases in that sentence which helped them decide this was the most important sentence. Using the same strategy, you can also help your students identify supporting sentences/ideas in a paragraph. Once students are able to identify the main words, phrases and sentences in a passage, their comprehension will greatly increase, and they will be able to read independently.

Sample paragraph:

The northern part of India is famous for its hill stations. Shimla, Manali, Gulmarg, Mussoorie and Nainital are some famous hill stations of North India. Tourists visit these hill stations to see the snow-covered mountains and beautiful valleys. These places are very cold, so many people from warmer parts of India come to enjoy the winter. The best time to visit these places is from October to March.

(Important words/phrases to underline : northern part, famous, hill stations, Shimla, Manali, Gulmarg, Mussoorie, Nainital, tourists, snow-covered mountains, beautiful valleys, cold, enjoy the winter, best time and October to March).

Let's stop and think

- ★ Besides a picture, what other things can you use to help students understand the concept of a 'main idea' and 'details'?
- ★ What preparations would you make before giving your students a similar task?

Unit summary

This unit comprises two case studies and two activities based on the learning gaps identified by Gunotsav 2017 results. In this unit you have read about the ways in which other teachers help their learners to identify details, characters, main idea and sequence of ideas in various texts, both inside and outside the classroom. Using the ideas presented in this unit, you will be able to help your learners to read not only the lessons in their syllabus but texts outside the syllabus. You can use the two activities in your class to help them understanding and identify main ideas of a paragraph and longer texts. The questions at the end of the case studies and activities are meant to help you reflect on the suggestions, so that you can modify them to suit your students' needs.

Suggested Questions

Read each sentence below and circle or underline the word/words that contain the main idea and other details.

1. Shobhna likes ice cream in cones rather than in cups.
2. Crows, peacocks and sparrow are birds that are commonly found in villages.

3. Mohan is a smart boy who likes to read books.
4. Mridu is a young girl growing up in Madras (now called Chennai) with Tapi, her grandmother, and Thada, her grandfather.
5. The project appears very difficult at first sight but it can be completed if we work very hard.
6. 'Mangrove' is the name commonly used for varieties of shrubs or trees growing in the muddy swamps of tropical coasts and estuaries. Mangroves produce tangled roots that grow above the ground. They produce new trunks and rapidly form a dense growth. Mangrove timber is very strong and does not allow water to damage it. It is also resistant to marine worms.
7. Early man didn't know what fire was, but he must have seen the damage it could cause. He must have watched lightning and volcanoes long before he began to use fire himself. Fire was powerful and dangerous, and he was delighted.
8. Travelling is a great teacher. It is an important part of education. Travelling makes people wise and broad-minded. It widens one's outlook. Travelling is a very interesting way of learning geography and the history of different people, ways and cultures of people quite different from ours. Most of all, travelling makes us know ourselves better.
9. Punctuality means the habit of doing things at the right time.
10. Nowadays there are few, especially in towns and cities, who do not read a newspaper. Even in villages the number of people reading newspapers is increasing. This is of course due to the spread of education.
11. An ant uses its feelers or antennae to 'talk' to other ants by passing messages through them. Watch a row of ants moving up or down the wall. Each ant greets all the others coming from opposite direction by touching their feelers.
12. Those of us who live in regions covered with forests and surrounded by hills may find it difficult to imagine what a desert is really like. The popular belief is that it is an endless stretch of sand where no rain falls and, therefore, no vegetation grows. It is dry, hot, waterless and without shelter. But this is not entirely correct. For those who have studied it, the desert can be a beautiful place. It is the home of a variety of people, animals and plants that have learnt to live under very hot and dry conditions.
13. According to some botanists plants are able to sense the vibrations of music through their stomata (pores). How this occurs is not yet known. Yields of some crops are reported to have increased greatly when the plants were exposed to music. Many plant lovers, including Prince Charles of Britain, believe that talking to plants makes them grow better.
14. Discipline is doing things in the right way. It needs a control over the mind and body. Discipline is very necessary for everyone in every walk of life at home, office, playground or any other place. Discipline also means following our elders, teachers and parents who can lead us towards our success. We need to follow rules and behave in an orderly manner so that we are healthy and successful. People who are not disciplined in their lives face a lot of problems and get easily disappointed.
15. The butterfly is a very colourful insect. We can see butterflies in the day time in gardens and forests. A butterfly has three parts in its body- the head, the thorax and the abdomen. It has two wings. Butterflies live on the nectar of flowers.
(These sentences and paragraphs have been collected from different books, the textbook for class VII, the Rapid Reader of Class VII, storybooks and grammar books.)

