

Strategies Used by More Proficient and Less Proficient Readers When Encountering Meanings of Unknown Words

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Introduction

Since effective reading plays a major role in gaining higher achievement in an academic setting, a great number of researchers and educators have been concerned with methods and approaches which enhance reading proficiency. Such concern leads to an attempt to explain the process of reading in terms of the strategies readers use while constructing meaning. Theoretical discussions and empirical studies on the reading process have finally brought about an interactive model of reading which holds promise for our understanding of the complex reading process. The model emphasizes the interaction between the "bottom-up" or the "decoding" process and the "top-down" process (Eskey, 1993, p. 94). Readers generally use a variety of strategies or "mental operations" while making sense of the text (Barnett, 1988, p. 150). These strategies reflect the use of top-down and bottom-up process. Top-down strategies refer to the strategies readers employ to get a general meaning of reading materials, while bottom-up strategies are used by readers to solve problems related to words.

Reading research in first language reported differences in strategies used by good and poor readers (Garner & Taylor, 1982, as cited in Swanson, 1988). Good readers tended to focus on getting the meaning of the whole text, while poor readers put emphasis on individual words (Garner & Kraus, 1982; Gambrell & Heathington, 1981; and Devine, 1984). Similarly, research in second language reading pointed to a relationship between strategy usage and comprehension level. More proficient readers tended to use strategies which assisted them in getting an overall meaning of the text, whereas less proficient readers tended to use strategies which assisted them in getting meanings of specific linguistic words, such as individual words rather than the whole text (Cziko, 1980; Block, 1986; Barnett, 1988; Carrell, 1989; and Block, 1992).

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The findings of previous reading research seemed to confirm that more proficient and less proficient readers employed different types of reading strategies to achieve comprehension. However, none of these studies has addressed the behaviors of more and less proficient readers in interpreting meanings of unknown words. During the last decade, second language researchers have shown greater interest in vocabulary acquisition. Eskey (1993) indicated that accurate decoding of a language was especially important to second language reading. Good readers had to decode both lexical units and syntactic structures they encountered in the text. Therefore, good decoding skills were one of the causes of fluent reading. In addition, Laufer (1997) argued that reading comprehension was impossible when the readers did not understand the text's vocabulary. Reading comprehension in both first and second language (L1 and L2) involved use of background knowledge, general reading strategies, such as predicting content, guessing unknown words in the context, making inferences, and grasping main ideas. Moreover, reading comprehension was strongly related to vocabulary knowledge. Beck, Perfetti, and McKeown (1982), Kameenui, Carnine, and Freschi (1982), and Stahl (1983) mentioned that vocabulary knowledge contributed to an improvement in reading comprehension. Laufer (1991) also found significant correlations between two different vocabulary tests and reading scores of L2 learners. Similarly, Coady, Hubbard, Graney, and Mokhtari (1993) conducted two experiments which showed that the readers' increased proficiency in vocabulary led to an increase in reading proficiency.

Even though the studies mentioned above pointed to the importance of vocabulary in reading comprehension, they tended to emphasize the product of reading or the obtained reading scores. Only Arden-Close (1993) examined the strategies used by nonnative speakers of varying proficiency levels to infer meanings of unfamiliar words. He reported the following results: (i) all readers, both proficient and less proficient, made use of their world knowledge; (ii) only the stronger readers used context wider than a paragraph, and the weakest students used context of the immediate sentence only; and (iii) the stronger the readers, the more variety of strategies used. Such findings indicated that more proficient and less proficient readers varied in their use of strategies. Nevertheless, since Arden-Close's study is still preliminary, there is a need to conduct further research to find out whether such a difference exists among foreign language readers. In addition, further research should investigate what types of strategies lead to successful interpretation of meanings of unknown words. As a result, the present study examines differences in numbers and types of strategies used by more proficient and less proficient readers and types of strategies which lead the readers to infer meanings of unknown words successfully. The following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the differences in frequencies of strategies used by more proficient and less proficient readers when encountering unknown words?
2. What are the differences in types of strategies used by more proficient and less proficient readers when encountering unknown words?
3. What types of strategies lead to successful interpretation of meanings of unknown words?

Method

Subjects

The subjects were fifteen students who enrolled in a graduate diploma program of business Communication at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA). To compare the strategies used by more proficient and less proficient readers when encountering unknown words, the researcher divided the subjects into more proficient and less proficient readers based on their reading scores on four tests (See Appendix B and C). More proficient readers consisted of four students who obtained scores in the top 25%, whereas less proficient readers were another four who obtained scores in the bottom 25%¹. Those whose scores were in the middle 50% were left out so that there was some difference in the reading ability between more proficient and less proficient readers.

Materials

A. Questionnaire

The subjects were given a questionnaire concerning their reading performance in English. Questions were about how they read in English, what they usually focused on when reading, what they usually did when encountering unknown words, what their reading abilities were, and what their strong and weak points were (See Appendix A).

B. Tests

The subjects were given four tests which examined how they dealt with unknown words when reading in English. All the tests were taken from academic texts. The approximate length of each text was 250-300 words. The nature of the tests and the topics are described below:

¹ The scores in the top 25% range from 30 to 35 points out of a total score of 40 points. The scores in the bottom 25% range from 20 to 25 points out of a total score of 40 points.

(i) Passages 1 and 2 were taken from a text on stress management. In these passages, the words to be explained were underlined. The subjects had to write what they thought each word meant and describe how and why they came to their decision (See Appendix B).

(ii) Passages 3 and 4 were taken from a text on communication. These passages were fill-in-the-blank exercises. The subjects followed the same procedure as the first two passages. While the subjects were able to see the words underlined and predict their meanings when they read Passages 1 and 2, there were no words in these passages. The subjects could only rely on the surrounding context to gain an understanding of the words in each blank. They had to choose one word which would fit each blank most appropriately from the given list (See Appendix C). The subjects were also asked to write the reasons why they chose a particular word to fill in the blank.

Procedures

1. The subjects filled out the questionnaires during the first class period.
2. The subjects were given one passage at a time (for each class period).
3. While reading the first two passages, the subjects were asked to write down (in either Thai or English) the meaning of each underlined word and any clues that assisted them in interpreting the meaning.
4. While reading the last two passages, the subjects had to select one word to fill in the blank from the given list. They also had to write the word down (in either Thai or English) on the sheet given and provide any clues that led them to choose a particular word.
5. The subject were told that they had no time constraint on the completion of each test.

Analysis

Qualitative analysis of the strategies reported:

A qualitative analysis of the data was conducted in order to develop an understanding of how the subjects used strategies to achieve an understanding of unknown words. First, the subjects' written reports concerning clues for interpreting the meanings of words were transcribed into English. Next, the transcribed written reports were analyzed to identify types of strategies the subjects used to understand the meanings of unknown words. Following are sentences from the passages, the subjects' written reports, and the assigned strategy types.

Passage 1:

If you do not want to record your feelings, why not discuss them with a friend?

For some people, putting feelings into words is the easiest way to release (1) **pent-up** emotions and it is one reason why the army has debriefing sessions.

Subject:

(1) pent-up

Meaning: moody

Clues: “‘Pent-up’ should mean ‘moody’ because the sentence hints that we should release something which is bad.”

Strategy: Using context within a sentence

Passage 3:

Whenever you make a statement, ask a question, make a request, or use spoken communication for any of its many functions, the verbal (1)..... of what you say is only one part of the message. Other very important aspects are the non-verbal aspects: the voice, the inflection of the voice, and the body language.

Subject:

(1) Word: communication

Clues: “I chose to fill in the blank with the word ‘communication’ because the previous part mentions ‘use of spoken communication’ and a noun is needed here.”

Strategy: Using context within a sentence and using grammar knowledge

After the subjects’ written reports were identified for types of strategies, the taxonomy of strategies was developed. The definitions are given for each type of strategy. There are nine categories in the taxonomy of strategies as presented in Table 1. Interrater agreement across two raters (the researcher and one language instructor) who classified a total of strategies on the written report was 90.

Table 1 Taxonomy of strategies

Strategy Category
(1) Using grammar knowledge
(2) Using context within a sentence
(3) Using context between sentences
(4) Using context between paragraphs
(5) Forming relationships between sentences
(6) Using background knowledge
(7) Referring to a title
(8) Applying knowledge of word structure
(9) Referring to synonyms/antonyms

Category One, using grammar knowledge, refers to the subjects' use of syntactic knowledge to arrive at meanings of unknown words.

Category Two, using context within a sentence, refers to the subjects' use of context in the stimulus sentence to understand unknown words without relating the stimulus sentence to other portions of the text.

Category Three, using context between sentences, reflects the subjects' attempt to relate the stimulus sentence to preceding or following sentences to interpret meanings of unknown words.

Category Four, using context between paragraphs, refers to subjects' use of context in the other paragraphs to understand meanings of unknown words.

Category Five, forming relationships between sentences, reflects the subjects' attempt to make connections between the previous and latter sentences. For example, the previous sentence is the cause and the latter sentence is the effect.

Category Six, using background knowledge, refers to the attempt of the subjects to interpret meanings of the words from their previous encounter with the words.

Category Seven, referring to a title, refers to the subjects' use of a title to help predict the meaning of unknown words.

Category Eight, applying knowledge of word structure, refers to the subjects' attempt to make use of their knowledge of the structure of words such as use of prefixes, suffixes, and affixes.

Category Nine, referring to synonyms and antonyms, reflects the subjects attempt to interpret meanings of unknown words through their synonyms or antonyms.

Quantitative Analysis of the strategies reported.

After the types of strategies were identified, the frequency of strategies was counted based on each occurrence of a strategy. Next, frequencies and percentages of each strategy category were calculated. In addition, chi-square was used to find out if the differences in frequencies of strategies used by more proficient and less proficient readers were statistically significant.

Results and Discussion

Differences in frequencies of strategies

The results indicated that more proficient readers applied strategies slightly more often than less proficient readers (See Tables 2). The total frequency of strategies used by more proficient readers was 194, whereas that of less proficient readers was 174. However, the difference in strategy usage between two groups was not statistically significant (see Table 3). The more proficient and less proficient readers employed a strategy in Category Two (using context within a sentence) most often; followed by one in Category One (using grammar knowledge); and Category Three (using context between sentences) respectively.

Table 2: Strategy categories and frequency counts in percentages of two groups of readers (More proficient VS. Less proficient)

Strategy Category	More proficient Freq (%)	Less proficient Freq (%)
(1) Using grammar knowledge	60 (30.9)	44(25.3)
(2) Using context within a sentence	78(40.2)	82(47.1)
(3) Using context between sentences	18(9.3)	21(12.1)
(4) Using context between paragraphs	8(4.1)	2(1.1)
(5) Forming relationships between sentences	16(8.2)	13(7.5)
(6) Using background knowledge	0(0.0)	1(0.6)
(7) Referring to a title	2(1.0)	0(0.0)
(8) Applying knowledge of word structure	7(3.6)	3(1.7)
(9) Referring to synonyms/antonyms	5(2.6)	8(4.6)
Total	194(100.0)	174(100.0)

Table 3: Overall frequencies and percentages of strategies in nine categories and results of chi-square.

Student Group	Strategy Category									Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
More proficient	60	78	18	8	16	0	2	7	5	194
	30.9	40.2	9.3	4.1	8.2	0	1.0	3.6	2.6	100.0
Less proficient	44	82	21	2	13	1	0	3	8	174
	25.3	47.1	12.1	1.1	7.5	0.6	0	1.7	4.6	100.0

LR X – 12.384 d.f. – 8, p = 135 (p > .05)

Note: It is suggested that Likelihood Ratio (LR) be used when figures in some cells are of too small value.

The results suggested that in foreign language reading, both more proficient and less proficient readers employed strategies to understand the meanings of unknown words. Such findings seem to be consistent with Vann and Abraham's (1990, as cited in Arden-Close, 1993, p. 868) which indicated that "unsuccessful learners used as many of the same strategies as the successful learners" (p. 868). Moreover, the frequency of strategy usage reflected that Thai readers in this study tended to use Strategy Category Two (using context within a sentence) most often when compared with other types of strategies. Such a finding might reflect the underlying pedagogical orientations in this culture. The subjects might be taught to focus on use context clues within a sentence to detect meanings of unknown words with less emphasis on using a variety of strategies to facilitate the comprehension of such words.

Differences in type of strategies

The findings indicated that both more proficient and less proficient readers used very similar types of strategies to interpret the meanings of unknown words. More proficient readers applied eight types of strategies, and so did less proficient readers. However, more proficient readers tended to use a strategy in Category Four (using context between paragraphs) four times more than less proficient readers. This finding implied that more proficient readers tended to make connections to the information read in a wider context than less proficient

readers who seemed to focus on using context within a sentence. The result from Strategy Category Seven (referring to a title) also confirmed that more proficient readers tended to approach a text in a broader context, that is, they used a title as a clue to the meaning of the unknown words. They did not merely look for the information within the paragraph itself, but tried to detect the unknown words from the overall meaning of the text. On the other hands, less proficient readers relied heavily on using context within a sentence and between sentences. Such a result is consistent with the findings of previous reading research. The previous studies in both first and second language reading reported that more proficient readers focused on the meaning of the whole text more than less proficient readers (Garner & Kraus, 1982; Gambrell & Healthington, 1981; Devine, 1984; Block, 1986; Barnett, 1988; Carrell, 1989; and Block, 1992). Although the nature of the present study requires both more and less proficient readers to put emphasis on inferring meanings of words, more proficient readers applied strategies which assisted them in understanding the meanings of words not only at a sentence level but also at a paragraph level. In addition, they tended to form relationships of parts of information together, whereas less proficient readers were more likely to focus on the immediate sentence or a sentence before or next to the sentence which prompted them to infer the meaning of an unknown word.

Furthermore, none of the proficient readers referred to their previous experience to interpret the meaning of unknown words, whereas one less proficient reader did. Even though the frequency of use of background knowledge is only one time, the result might imply that less proficient readers tended to neglect the importance of developing the ability to use a broader context to construct meaning of what they did not know. As Cooper (1984) stated, "unpracticed readers showed a tendency to use previous knowledge that was irrelevant to the context (p. 124)." He further added that unskillful readers relied more on meanings of words they had previously encountered without considering the meaning carried by the larger context. Moreover, they were preoccupied with the unknown word and its immediate context without taking into consideration the potential meaning in the whole context.

Another important finding is that the more proficient readers generally employed more than one strategy to interpret the meaning of unknown words. For instance, to figure out the meaning of the underlined word, "halt," the more proficient reader used Strategy Category Two, using context within a sentence, Strategy Category Three, using context between sentences, and Strategy Category Five, forming relationship between sentences as illustrated below.

Passage 4:

The ultimate cost of stress is that our body stops functioning. Like a car which is overworked and denied proper care, it will grind to a (1) **halt**.

A more proficient subject:

(1) halt

Meaning: stop; breakdown machine

Clues: (i) “ ‘Overworked’ and ‘denied proper care’ show a bad effect.”

(ii) “The previous sentence provides a clue, ‘stop functioning’.”

(iii) “ ‘Like’ indicates that the following sentence has a similar meaning as the previous sentence.”

Strategies: Strategy Category Two (using context within a sentence);
Strategy Category Three (using context between sentences);
Strategy Category Five (Forming relationship between sentences)

On the other hand, a less proficient reader used the strategy in Category Two, using context within a sentence, to figure out the meaning of the word “halt” as shown below.

(1) halt

Meaning: part

Clues: “The sentence indicates that human’s body is like a car and if people do not take care of themselves, they will be sick and broken down into parts like a car.”

Responses to the background questionnaires also indicated that when facing unknown words, less proficient readers reported that they relied on use of a dictionary, whereas more proficient readers reported applying a wide variety of strategies to infer the meanings of unknown words. They also added that they needed to look for more than one clue to arrive at the meanings.

Strategies which lead to successful interpretation of meanings of unknown words

The findings indicated that strategies which most frequently led to successful interpretations of meanings of unknown words were Strategy Category Two (using context within a sentence); Strategy Category One (using grammar knowledge); and Strategy Category Three (using context between sentences) respectively. Table 4 illustrates frequencies of use of these three strategies. Such findings suggested that context within a sentence was most effective in inferring meanings of unknown words.

Table 4: Comparisons between total frequencies of strategies and those which lead to correct interpretation of meanings of unknown words.

Strategy Category	More proficient		Less proficient	
	Total	Correct	Total	Correct
(1) Using grammar knowledge	60	50	44	33
(2) Using context within a sentence	78	67	82	48
(3) Using context between sentences	18	14	21	12
(4) Using context between paragraphs	8	7	2	0
(5) Forming relationships between sentences	16	12	13	1
(6) Using background knowledge	0	0	1	0
(7) Referring to a title	2	2	0	0
(8) Applying knowledge of word structure	7	6	3	1
(9) Referring to synonyms/antonyms	5	3	8	6
Total	194	161	174	101

The findings also showed that more proficient readers were able to interpret the meanings of unknown words correctly employing a variety of types of strategies. Besides the three most frequently used strategies mentioned above, more proficient readers used context between paragraphs, formed relationships between sentences, referred to a title, applied knowledge of word structure, and referred to synonyms and antonyms. On the other hand, less proficient readers formed relationships between sentences, applied knowledge of word structure, and referred to synonyms and antonyms only. It should be noted that approximately 80% of the strategies that more proficient readers used assisted them in getting at the correct meanings of unknown words. Even though more proficient readers used context within a sentence slightly less than less proficient readers (78; 82 respectively), more proficient readers were able to interpret the correct meanings of unknown words more than less proficient readers (67; 48 respectively).

The findings also implied that an investigation of numbers and types of strategies might not be sufficient to distinguish reading performance of more and less proficient readers. As Table 2 and Table 3 illustrate, the strategies used by more and less proficient readers were not significantly different in numbers and types, but more proficient readers were able to arrive at the correct meanings of unknown words more often than less proficient ones. Further reading research

should also take into account how readers apply strategies rather than focusing only on numbers and types of strategies used.

Furthermore, the data showed that more proficient readers tended to use a combination of strategies to infer the correct meaning of each unknown word. Accordingly, the researcher further examined which strategies are frequently used in combination with others to interpret the correct meaning of each word. Table 5 illustrates the frequencies of strategies used in combination with other strategies to interpret meaning of each unknown word.

Table 5: Frequencies of total strategies used and those frequently applied with other strategies to interpret meaning of each unknown word successfully.

Strategy Category	More proficient		Less proficient	
	Use (Total)	Use with others	Use (Total)	Use with others
(1) Using grammar knowledge	60	31	44	13
(2) Using context within a sentence	78	26	82	7
(3) Using context between sentences	18	7	21	4
(4) Using context between paragraphs	8	3	2	0
(5) Forming relationships between sentences	16	5	13	1
(6) Using background knowledge	0	0	1	0
(7) Referring to a title	2	0	0	0
(8) Applying knowledge of word structure	7	1	3	0
(9) Referring to synonyms/antonyms	5	1	8	0
Total	194	74	174	25

The results in Table 5 indicated that the strategy which is used most frequently in combination with other strategies to arrive at the correct meaning of each unknown word was Strategy Category One, using grammar knowledge, followed by Strategy Category Two, using context within a sentence, and Strategy Category Three, using context between sentences respectively. The following example shows how the subject employed a combination of strategies to interpret the meaning of an unknown word.

Passage 2

As an international hotel consultant put it: “If only the last period (of stress in my life) had been a decade later, I would have been more aware that I was stressed and then taken steps to (10) **alleviate** the situation. Perhaps I would not have had my heart attack.

Subject

(10) alleviate

Meaning: relieve

Clues: (i) I guess the meaning from the following context: “I would have been more aware that I was stressed and then taken steps to alleviate the situation.”
 (ii) I also look at the next sentence: “Perhaps I would not have had my heart attack.”

The example above showed that the subject used context within a sentence and context between sentences to arrive at the correct meaning. The findings also suggested that more proficient readers employed more combinations of various strategies to figure out the meaning of each unknown word, whereas less proficient readers tended to rely heavily on the first three strategies. The findings suggested that even though both groups of readers employed a combination of strategies to infer meaning of each word, more proficient readers were more successful in the use of a combination of strategies to figure out the correct meaning because they tended to combine a greater variety of strategies which focused on both the immediate and the broader context. Such use of combination of strategies finally assisted them in interpreting the correct meaning of each individual word. Their frequencies of simultaneous use of several strategies which led them to interpret the meaning of each unknown word were approximately three times higher than those of less proficient readers (74 and 25 respectively).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Effective reading involves an interaction between the reader and the text. The readers have to use their background knowledge, build relationships between the sentences in the text, and apply clues provided by the author to construct meaning of the text. The ultimate success of reading depends on several factors. The present study suggested that the more the readers applied a variety of strategies, the more they could successfully interpret meanings of unknown words. Both proficient and less proficient readers seemed to construct meanings in the

text through use of strategies. However, what led more proficient readers to be more successful in inferring meanings was their effective use of strategies. They tended to apply several strategies simultaneously to confirm their interpretations of meanings of words. In addition, more proficient readers were likely to form relationships of information in a broader context. This result implied that they put emphasis on the overall meanings rather than words or individual sentences. On the other hand, less proficient readers seemed to put less emphasis on the overall relationship of information in the text.

The investigation of strategy usage has implications for both research and pedagogical practice. The taxonomy of strategies developed from the subjects' written reports may be useful to other researchers. Although the taxonomy is not a complete representation of all possible strategies, it does represent the cognitive operations of the subjects in this study when they attempted to infer the meanings of unknown words. Moreover, further research should address the importance of simultaneous use of several strategies which assist the readers in inferring the meaning of each unknown word. In addition, further studies should take into consideration the strategies which lead the readers to interpret correct meanings of unknown words and should examine whether such strategies can also be used successfully by less proficient readers.

Next, the study has the following limitations which should be considered in future research. First, the population in the study is small; therefore, generalizability of the findings is limited. Replications using a greater number of subjects are necessary. Second, criteria for classifying more and less proficient readers should be established through use of a variety of measures. "More proficient" and "less proficient" may simply be more proficient and less proficient reading behaviors at different times according to different reading situations. Third, a greater variety of test formats should be used because each format may demand different use of strategies. Last, other effects on use of strategies such as genres and difficulty levels of the reading materials should be investigated to examine the extent to which these variables have an effect on use of strategies when inferring meanings of unknown words by more and less proficient readers.

The study also has implications for classroom practice. A major concern is whether the students can and should be taught to use a wider type of strategies. The findings indicated that both more and less proficient readers tended to rely heavily on the following strategies; using context within a sentence and using grammar knowledge. This may reflect the instructional orientation which emphasizes these two strategies rather than other types of strategies. Therefore, reading instructors should inform students to employ a wider use of strategies to comprehend unknown words. In addition, reading instructors should encourage the students to use a combination of strategies to confirm their predictions

of the meaning of each unknown word. Furthermore, the results of this study suggested that even though less proficient readers used almost similar types of strategies as more proficient readers, they were not as successful as more proficient ones in inferring meanings of unknown words correctly. Therefore, reading instructors should not only introduce strategies to learners and confirm that they use such strategies but examine how they should use strategies to correctly interpret meanings of unknown words.

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Appendix A

Background Questionnaire

Name:.....

Sex:.....

Highest Degree Obtained:.....

1. When did you start reading in English?
.....

2. How did you learn to read in English?
.....

3. How often do you read in English? (hours/week)
.....

4. What do you usually read in English now?
.....

5. When you are reading in English, what do you usually focus on?
.....

6. When you are reading in English and encounter a word you are not familiar with, what do you do?
.....
.....

7. Does what you do in No. 6 help you understand the meaning of the word better? Why?
.....
.....

8. In your opinion, how do you judge whether a person is/is not a good reader of English? Explain
.....
.....

9. Do you think you are a good reader of English? Why? Why not?
.....
.....

10. What are your strong and weak points as an English reader?
.....
.....

11. What would you like to do better as a reader of English?
.....
.....

12. In your view, what can you do to improve your reading skill?
.....
.....

Appendix B

Passage 1

Instructions: Read the passage below. Use context clues to guess the meaning of the underlined words. Write down any clues that help you guess the meaning of each word.

Release tension by talking to a friend

If you do not want to record your feelings, why not discuss them with a friend? For some people, putting feelings into words is the **easiest** way to release (1) **pent-up** emotions and it is one reason why the army has debriefing sessions. It provides an opportunity to (2) "**talk yourself down**" from a stressful experience. Sometimes the other person can talk you down but more often the (3) **onus** is on you; the other person is just an ear. There is more than a little truth in the idea that "Just talking helps."

If you arrange a (4) **debriefing**, set the ground rules in advance. This can prevent the session from (5) **degenerating** into pointless argument. Good ground rules allow you to say whatever you feel, however unreasonable it may seem. There is no need to (6) **rationalize** the problem or justify action. The purpose is for you to (7) "**get it off your chest**." The result should be that you have (8) "**cooled off**" and (9) **unwound** ready for the task ahead of you.

If you do not regularly let go of at least some of your stress, you run the danger of allowing it to build up. This can produce what psychologists call the upward spiral of tension and (10) **downward spiral** in performance.

Passage 2

Instructions: Read the passage below. Use context clues to guess the meaning of the underlined words. Write down any clues that help you guess the meaning of each word.

The cost of stress

The ultimate cost of stress is that your body stops functioning. Like a car which is overworked and denied proper care, it will grind to a (1) **halt**.

The more subtle cost of stress is that the body does not stop all at once, but that different parts of the body literally take the (2) **strain**. It may be your skin, or your stomach, or your heart, or even your temperament. Whatever it is, you will perform less effectively, and feel less good physically and psychologically.

The cost of stress does not stop there. The (3) **knock-on** effects make it more difficult for you to cope. For example, stress can make you irritable and short-tempered. The unhappy consequences of this can be that you (4) **turn away**

potential supporters by the way that you treat them. This can leave you feeling even more pressured than before. From this position, people all too often turn to supports that in the long run do not give support at all. Alcohol is one example of this. In (5) **moderation**, alcohol can be a great help (in fact, the Maudsley Clinic believes that one glass of wine each day is more (6) **beneficial** than no alcohol at all). However, as a basis for support it can easily (7) **get out of hand** and lead to further problems.

So, the (8) **cost** of stress can be high and you can end up (9) **paying this price** simply because you have ignored the warning signals sent out by your body. As an international hotel consultant put it: "If only the last period (of stress in my life) had been a decade later, I would have been more aware that I was stressed and then taken steps to (10) **alleviate** the situation. Perhaps I would not have had my heart attack.

Appendix C

Passage 3

Directions: Read the following passage and choose the word that will fit each blank most appropriately from the given list.

Whenever you make a statement, ask a question, make a request, or use spoken communication for any of its many functions, the verbal (1) of what you say is only one part of the message. Other very important aspects are the nonverbal aspects: the voice, the inflection of the voice, and the body language. When all these are (2) the same message, your message has a good chance of being 100 per cent clear and (3) to the listener. When there is a (4) between them, the impact of what you say is very much reduced by the way you say it.

If your verbal language is not clear, that is if you speak in English to someone who only speaks Greek, it is (5) that you will be clearly understood. (6), with signs and gestures, smiles and nods, some things can be communicated. What is not so immediately obvious is that if your verbal message is quite clear (that is, you have noted and used all the ground rules) and you then use (7) non-verbal language, your verbal language will be heard but not believed. If, (8), you say, "I can manage perfectly well, thank you" in a whining voice as you struggle to hold open a door with your foot and maneuver a chair through it, you are (9) likely to be believed than when you give the same message in a clear, firm voice having wedged the door open first. It has been demonstrated many times that when there is a (10) between the verbal and the non-verbal content of a message, the non-verbal is likely to be believed.

List of words

appropriate	for example	match	such as
As a result	giving	mismatch	Therefore
communication	having	more	unlikely
content	However	properly	very
difference	inappropriate	speaking	
effective	less	similarity	
for a reason	likely	successful	

Passage 4

Directions: Read the following passage and choose the word that will fit each blank most appropriately from the given list.

All the time we are talking to someone face to face we are (1) for a reaction. Their eyes tell us (2) they are listening or not, whether they are involved in what we are saying or whether they are intrigued, intimidated, or just plain bored. It is impossible to (3) with someone who is looking at a television or a visual display unit or if they have their (4) at you. It is also very (5) to talk to someone who stares all the time and never breaks their gaze. (6) communication depends on being able to engage and hold the other's eyes but to vary that gaze to the rest of the face as you talk.

If all this seems impossible and too much to change, don't worry. The reason that the voice and body are so effective in communication is (7) people use them this way without thinking. It is the naturalness with which they are used which makes them believable and dependable aspects of communication. (8) what about you are doing, it just happens.

You need only to be careful, when you want to subdue your reactions and feelings, to keep the communication effective and your behavior assertive. (9) the message right on these occasions means not only getting the words right (10) conveying the same message with your body and your voice.

List of words

allowing	difficult	guessing	thought
also	ear	However	Unless
although	easy	looking	
back	effectiveness	possibility	
because	either	say	
but	face	so	
communicate	getting	successful	