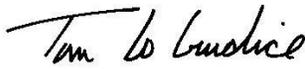APPLICATION OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN COLLEGE READING

CLASS

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Abstract

The amount information a student receives is largely determined by their reading ability. A summary of the Discourse Analysis (DA) approach is presented as a way of understanding the reading process. This paper has several valuable suggestions and implications for ESL teaching. The paper provides a discussion of some of the theoretical and methodological bases of DA. There are two overall research question addressed in this paper, the first is: Whether the English teachers and students are aware of the presence of discourse analysis in reading comprehension? Second, What effect does DA-based instruction have on intermediate and advanced second language learners' reading ability?

APPLICATION OF DISCORSE ANALYSIS IN

COLLEGE READING COURSES

A Seminar Paper Research

Presented to the

Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

by
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2009

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In English, reading is a significant means of communication. In modern society, people gain most of their knowledge thru reading. In recent decades reading ability has been highlighted in the classroom and widely assessed using a variety of testing methods in China. Reading means decoding the discourse in the given text and encoding it into valuable information accordingly, often reflecting different implications and meanings according to the context. Early readers of English must proceed beyond the utterance level and do more than follow the words to form-meaning. Discourse is the general unit of in the hierarchy of reading process, and discourse with comprehension as the final aim in the decoding process of the raw material of reading and the first and foremost phase in the encoding process of needed information.

In English as a Foreign Language, (EFL) classrooms there is confusion when authentic materials are used. The problem is compounded when students are presented a   variety of texts. Of course there may be sound teaching reasons for such a choice. However, it is pertinent to note that the text of reading material is not an isolated combined gathering of words and sentences. Attention cannot be focused only on the syntactic and semantic analysis of the single words or sentences, but also as a communicative function. However, past studies suggests that most Chinese college students are able to understand the formal structures

and logical meaning material with an average of degree of difficulty, within general and familiar topics, but they cannot understand the rhetorical and functional meanings of sentences, or sentences with specific topics or involving culture differences. The basic reason may be their lack of training in Discourse Analysis (hereafter called DA) is ignorance of even the simplest DA techniques.

This report focus is on English majors reading ability on the basis of reconsideration of reading from the perspective of cognitive psychology. In China, the National Curriculum for Majors issued by the Ministry of Education explicitly states the requirements of reading comprehension ability as follows:

1 .improving the ability of reading comprehension and reading speed;

2. cultivating their logic ability of analyzing, inferring, inducing and deducing;

3. improving their reading skills such as skimming, scanning and referencing;

4. enlarging students' vocabularies, getting linguistic and cultural

background knowledge through reading practice (Douglas ,2001)

Concretely, students should be able to analyze the points of view, structure of the texts, linguistic features and figures of speech of the texts. They are required to be able to read a text of about 1,600 words quickly in 5 minutes and grasp the theme and author's point of view, and understand the facts and details discussed in the text. In order to improve the non-English majors' reading efficiency, the author

put forward the DA approach, and takes it into practice in the teaching of reading to test its effect.

Statement of Problem

Two questions guide this study. The first question is "what is the awareness level of Chinese English teachers and students of the DA in reading comprehension? ".The second question is "What effect do DA teaching instruction have non-English major's reading ability?".

Delimitations of the Research

The research was conducted in and through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Primary searches were conducted via the Internet through Google, and the search engines Wilson Data Base, and Academic Search Elite as the primary sources through Karrmann. Key search topics included "English teaching in China", "Discourse Analysis", "CLT", and "ESL teaching methods" . Review of the literature was also conducted in Library of Beijing Foreign Studies University.

Method of Approach

A brief review of literature on the discourse analysis teaching was conducted. A second review of literature relating to research, studies, and introduction of theory basis of discourse analysis was conducted. The findings were summarized and recommendations were made.

A questionnaire of Chinese Teachers of English and their students regarding awareness of DA as a teaching and learning technique may be developed and administered if approval is provided.

Definition of Terms

The term **discourse** is a general way to refer to all kinds of language in use, that is, language which has been produced as the result of an act of communication, whether written or spoken. while the correct grammar rules are central to the sentence-grammarians, discourse analysts take a different view of the rule-governed aspects of languages. They are more interested in observing naturally occurring languages with a view to discovering and describing regularities in language use rather than rules of grammar only. **Discourse Analysis (DA),** as the term suggests, is the analysis of discourse, or in other words, the analysis of the language in use, which is taken by many as a methodology. Interestingly however, the term "language analysis" is not

employed, perhaps, for the distinction that "language" is conventionally used to refer to the abstract side of language such as the phonological, morphological and syntactic system, but in discourse analysis, researchers are more interested in what actually happens in various kinds of human communication.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A Brief Historical Review

Discourse Analysis is concerned with the study of the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used. It grew out of work in different disciplines in the 1960s and early 1970s, including linguistics, psychology, anthropology and sociology.

At a time when linguistics was largely concerned with the analysis of single sentence, Harris published a paper with the title "Discourse analysis" (Harris 1952). Harris was interested in the distribution of linguistic elements in extended texts, and the links between the text and its social situation. In the 1960s, Hymes provided a sociological perspective with the study of speech in its social setting (1964).

American discourse analysis has been dominated by work within the ethno-methodological tradition, which emphasizes the research method of close observation of groups of people communicating in natural settings. It examines types of speech event such as storytelling, greeting rituals and verbal duels in different cultural and social settings. What is often called conversational analysis, the emphasis is not upon building structural models but on the close observation of the behavior of participants in talk and on patterns which recur over a wide range of natural data. The work of Goffman (1976), and Sacks, Schegloff and

Jefferson (1974) are important in the study of conversational norms, turn-talking, and other aspects of spoken interaction. The American work has produced a large number of descriptions of discourse types, as well as insights into the social constraints of politeness and face-preserving phenomena in talk.

Discourse analysis has grown into a wide-ranging and heterogeneous discipline which finds its unity in the description of language above the sentence and interest in the contexts and cultural influences which affect language in use. It is also now, increasingly, forming a backdrop to research in Applied Linguistics, and second language learning and teaching in particular.

Justification for Discourse Analysis

In EFL classrooms where authentic and quasi-authentic materials are used, students are often confronted with a potentially confusing variety of texts. This can be justified with the pedagogical objective of providing abundant exposure to as many instances as possible of language used in real contexts. It can be argued that such exposure will help students to develop their comprehension and production skills to ensure success in their academic and professional practices. The pedagogical approach suggested   is based on a conception of language as a social semiotics, that is, a resource used to transmit essential patterns of a culture realized in the texts produced by the members of that culture (Halliday, 1978;). The task for EFL teachers should be to develop in students an attitude that

promotes the exploration and discovery of (1) basic text types, (2) the structure of the values linguistically encoded, and (3) their social function.

In light of this, texts should be viewed as laboratories for analysis, with the ultimate aim being to improve the students overall performance. Emphasized are learner-based theories (Dickinson, 1991). Such theories generally stress social interaction, critical thinking skills, language awareness and psychological autonomy Also receiving focus is a process approach that advocates reading-writing connections and the teaching of reading and writing processes together, encouraging their constant interaction, since they are considered to be similar acts of construction and response.
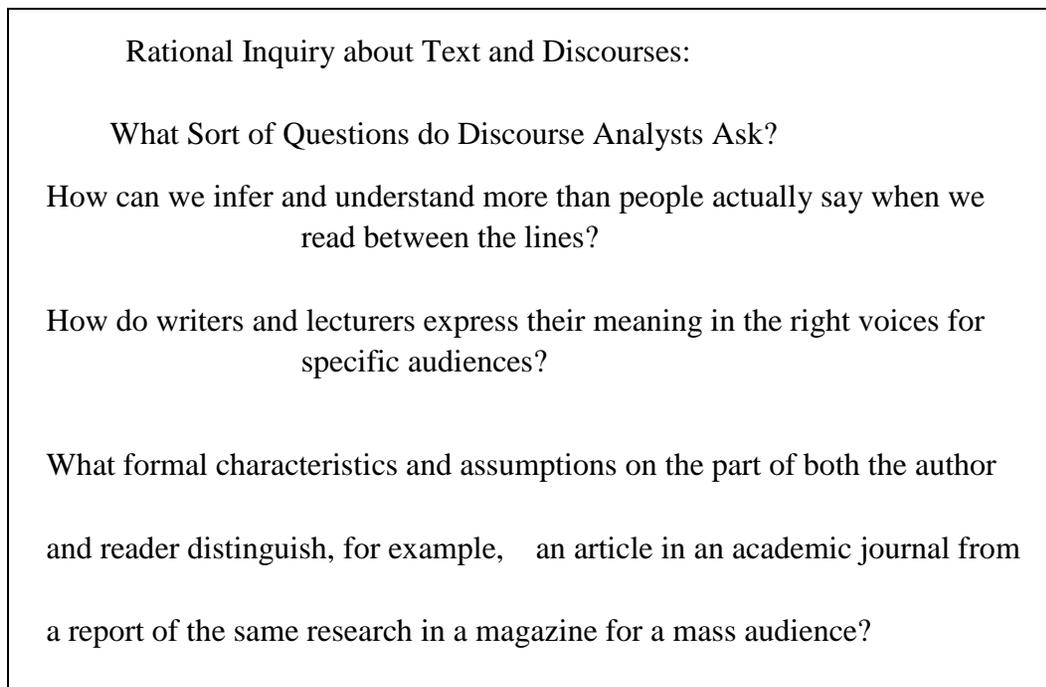
DA should be broadly approached so that on completion of their course of studies at university level, students as new language professionals (teachers, material writers, etc.) can decide on the appropriateness of the materials available for classroom and professional use. They should know how to incorporate insights and techniques from applied DA so as to be able to select and produce materials relevant to their own specific situations. Specifically within language teaching situations, DA may be of use when assessing the content of a publication for classroom use or when choosing representative texts to present and practice one particular grammatical or conceptual area. As DA covers and relates in an explanatory fashion a vast domain of knowledge within linguistics, it may be used to enhance the future language professionals' theoretical and methodological

insights by enabling them to focus on how language is used in order to achieve certain communicative aims.

Discourse Analysis: Possibilities for Language Teaching and Learning

DA has become a leading discipline in the field of applied linguistic studies, exerting a significant influence on language teaching. Knowledge of it can certainly be very useful for students, trainees and practicing teachers. Discourse analysts look for regularities in patterns and features occurring in stretches of actual language in use, both in the written and spoken modes, so that broad categorizations can be formulated in regards to both the formal and the functional aspects of any given coherent chunk of language. The sorts of questions discourse analysts ask amount to a rationalist, linguistically informed interrogation of a text. The ability to do this type of inquiry can and should be extended to language professionals such as teacher trainers, teachers, and translators. (See Figure 1 for examples of the sorts of questions asked in DA.)

Figure 1

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Rational Inquiry about Text and Discourses:

What Sort of Questions do Discourse Analysts Ask?

How can we infer and understand more than people actually say when we
                    read between the lines?

How do writers and lecturers express their meaning in the right voices for
                    specific audiences?


What formal characteristics and assumptions on the part of both the author

and reader distinguish, for example,    an article in an academic journal from

a report of the same research in a magazine for a mass audience?
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Once an adequate collection of texts has been chosen for intermediate and advanced level students of English (with their academic and future professional needs as the main criteria), a preliminary use of discourse analysis in instruction might consist of gist activities that ask the students to determine subject matter. Then, attention could be focused on the vocabulary used throughout, with particular reference to the authors' choice of lexical items, register, and use of metaphor and other stylistic devices. In particular, an interesting area to embark on is the analysis of lexical processes in text, including collocation and word

reiteration. Depending on the students' level, another possibility is to explore the grammatical links that tie the text together. This analysis will reveal the cohesive elements   reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunction as well as the discourse markers (Schiffrin, 1987) and the semantic relationships they convey to make the text hang together as a unified whole.   Such an analysis can be used create word sets which not only highlight target content vocabulary, but can also be used to show how cohesion and coherence are accomplished in the text (Halliday and Hasan, 1989)

Afterwards, pedagogical analysis might turn on some typical syntactic patterns or formal regularities in the linguistic realizations according to the level of proficiency required. Some leading questions include: Are the sentences and structures too complex? Where does the linguistic complexity lie: in the length, the ideas, the information structure within and beyond sentence level? Has the original text been abridged or simplified for teaching purposes? In order to consolidate different linguistic patterns, while analyzing the text, it is interesting to observe both structural and lexical repetition, since these provide conceptual links and a considerable amount of input.

 Strategies for Text Comprehension and Understanding Organization and Writer's Purpose Effective readers not only understand what they read but also form reasonable ideas about who it was written for and why it was written.   They

also can make judgments about whether or not the writer's choice of lexis, style and organization match the genre the writer has chosen. The set of questions below in Figure 2 provide learners with a framework to simultaneously analyses a text and develop their own skills at this important ability. Although simple, they summarize some of the ideas provided throughout this article. These DA tools can help contribute to intermediate students EFL training as springboards to the systematic exploration of how language is used to create certain communicative purposes and achieve specific goals. At this level, the emphasis on the deconstruction-construction process turns to a focus on text content and its functional aspects as well as on its organization or rhetorical disposition. Students should become familiar with some of the most common structural-textual ways of organizing content at the paragraph or discourse level, such as exemplification, illustration, comparison, contrast, definition, causal analysis, and so on.

Since language is not just a set of forms, the surface-level and formal description of standard language or discourse patterns is necessary, but not sufficient. What is needed is to explore other linguistic, psychological and social factors that are functional in nature since they allow us to achieve particular objectives with the language. Since meaning-making is as important as form-making, the students attention should be geared to a careful and thorough analysis of the lexical choices made by the writer from the multiple possibilities that the linguistic system offers generic nouns, deictic elements, inclusive and

exclusive pronouns, the selection of syntactic forms the organization of the information and the hierarchy established, the use of modality markers, and so on. As the analyses proceed, one after the other, the student's cognitive development will increase and their insights will in turn enhance their composing processes as they write discourse on topics of their own choice.

CHAPTER THREE
THE RESEARCH IN THE CLASSROOM

Two research questions are formulated in this study. The first question is whether the English teachers and students are aware of the presence of discourse analysis in reading comprehension? Second question is to test the hypothesis; that is do discourse-based approach have good effects on non-English majors' reading comprehension.

Students were divided into two groups, the experiment class named class 1, the contrast class named class two, class 1 are composed of the 34 students picked out. The rest 46 belong to class 2. During the research, all the sophomores were prepared for CET-3. The author chose 8 reading comprehension passages from different reference books concerning with hundreds of passages. This decision is out of the consideration, i.e. cet-3 which is based on sophomores' curriculum and syllabus is 17 to evaluate the fundamental English proficiency of students. So it has a long-established credit of high reliability and validity, which can guarantee the reliability and validity of this study. The author divided 8 passages into two parts in two reading test paper. The 8 passages are all from the cet-3 test questions.

The Application of Discourse Analysis

Language learners face the monumental task of acquiring not only new vocabulary, syntactic patterns, and phonology, but also discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and interactional competence. Without knowledge of and experience with the discourse and sociocultural patterns of the target language, second or foreign language learners are likely to

rely on the strategies and expectations acquired as part of their first language development, which may be inappropriate for the second or foreign language setting and may lead to communication difficulties and misunderstandings. So learners need to learn to use discourse analysis in comprehension. A large volume of work indicates that we can effectively help students to enhance their reading ability by the application of discourse analysis. The following approaches to comprehension are dependent on the discourse analysis. Class 2

1) Macro-level: Lead-in

In the teaching of reading with discourse-based approach, the "macro-level" phase is the elementary phase. The phase, which intends to let students learn to grasp the main contents and rhetorical organization of the discourse before real reading, concerns the teaching and training in background knowledge and textual knowledge. Background knowledge or prior knowledge, which includes knowledge of content as well as knowledge of specific strategies and metal cognitive knowledge, refers to the sum total of what the individual knows about the knowledge of outer world at any given points. Textual knowledge refers to the genre, frame and structure of a discourse. A lot of research reports have shown that with the lack of the background knowledge and textual knowledge, the readers will not reach the correct and overall comprehension of a discourse. The English teacher should try to select strategies which activate and utilize the students' prior knowledge and textual knowledge.

2) Micro-level: Analysis and Interpretation

The middle and key phase in the teaching of reading with discourse-based approach is micro-level analysis and interpretation. In this process, it focuses on the teaching and training of words, sentences, cohesive device and thematic structure, so as to teach the students about the connectivity and coherence, and understand the main content of the text in detail.

To some extent, paragraph analysis is regarded as the unit of the discourse analysis. Teachers should teach and train students to analyze each paragraph to get the understanding of the paragraph by means of thematic structure, cohesive and coherent devices, etc. Each sentence has its theme, and paragraph would be connected and coherent by cohesive devices. Capturing the thematic structure, and recognizing the cohesion or cohesive devices in reading helps to follow the writer's thinking, understand the writer's intention and got topic sentence of paragraph quickly.

3) Overall Comprehension of Discourse

The terminal phase in the teaching of reading is the overall comprehension of discourse. This phase concerns with the teaching and training of an ideas of cohesion and coherence between paragraphs and the theme of a discourse so as to get the overall comprehension of it.

① Understanding the Main Idea

Students perhaps are puzzled at what on earth one text indicates if the text is complex in structure and involves much information, such as culture, social background knowledge. Correct global prediction and understanding of the

general topic provide the basis for locating main ideas of a discourse. But to obtain the more accurate main ideas, students still need to learn to employ more discourse strategies. With the help of the topic and the topic sentences along with the opening and closing paragraphs, which help to give clues to intention and conclusion of the writer, students will get the main idea easily.

2 Making Inferences

Sometimes a writer will prefer to suggest or express something indirectly in a text, that is, in a more subtle and implicit way. In other words, a writer will imply something and leave it to the readers to dig out what is meant, which calls for more careful reading and thinking. Students must make efforts to infer the writer's implied meaning in a sentence, paragraph or even a text in order to get the true and higher comprehension of the text. The students should be armed with discourse knowledge and trained to be able to read between the lines, i.e. to be able to find out what is not explicitly stated by the writer. It can be inferred from the attitudinal and descriptive words and phrases the writer uses, and from the knowledge of world of the readers.

3 Making Evaluation and Appreciation

This is a higher understanding of text. It is a process that the readers don't accept what the writers writes, while produce their own ideas on the topic of the text. While in this process, readers do not necessarily find fault of the text, and need to deal with the worth or merit of a text, that is, question and judge merit and the worth of information the text contains, such as the writers' attitude, purpose

and strengths. The teachers can have students to look at the ideas and messages in a broader context.

Results and Analysis

Figure 3 the contrast status about the 2 classes' reading level

class	N	The excellent rate in text1	The excellent rate in text2	The passing rate in text1	The passing rate in text2
Class1	34	15.15%	27.27%	68.18%	90.91%
Class2	46	16.15%	22.73%	67.15%	72.21%

It is quite evident that students in class 1 has gained more effective and greater reading ability after being taught and trained with the discourse-based approach within the framework of discourse analysis, while students in class 2, who were just taught in the traditional way are improved a little. This further shows that the contrast objectively indicates that the effect of discourse-based approach in the teaching of reading is great. We can figure out that the passing rate are fiercely raised compared to class 2. And the excellent rate are raised at the same time, the class 1 has an efficient advance than class 2.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discourse analysis has been a specialist study, which greatly raise the interest of English teachers. The major findings presented in this paper could be generalized as follows:

Through the means of test, questionnaire, interviews, the results indicate that discourse analysis-approach strategy in the preliminary results. Its specific represent in the following phases: students are glad to take discourse analysis in the reading class, they have an interest in reading, in extracurricular time they actively began to read English reading materials. And the reading processes are handier: They feel they benefit great from discourse analysis methods, in that them Borden their horizon, enrich the imagination, are more accurate and easier to learn to understand the gist of the article and the author's intention of writing, and enable them to learn from each other. Meanwhile, it inspired students to learn English with enthusiasm. Also, encouraging students eagerly to understand more knowledge of English in front of their classmates in order to show their superiority is necessary. These students are bound to promote the improvement of the standard of English. Experimental classes reading achievement of the progress significantly higher than the control class results, which fully shows that the use of discourse analysis, fully mobilize the enthusiasm of the students and initiative, the main teachers, the students - led approach to the teaching of reading. to improve the reading level of students.

As shown in this study, discourse-based approach has obvious good effects on non-English majors' reading comprehension. It exerted great influence on the efficiency of the reading ability through the experiments and revealed in the analysis of statistical results.

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Appendix

This survey aims at discovery of the difficulties and reading habits through the process of English reading comprehension, and helps the teacher to figure out the current situation of EFL classroom and the awareness level of Discourse Analysis (DA). None of these questions has absolute standard solutions, please read them carefully and fill them out.
Thanks for your cooperation!

1. When I am reading a text, I _____realize I am translating the words from English to Chinese one by one.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

2. When reading a passage, I_____grasp the whole meaning at first,

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

3. When coming across a word initially, I_____turn to the dictionary.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

4. When reading a passage, I _____read every words aloud with a pen pointing at them moving forward.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

5. When doing the reading comprehension quiz, I _____read the text content first, then comes to the questions.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

6. When reading a passage, I _____ analyze its structure and style.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

7. In the process of reading a passage, I_____guessing the meaning of the word according to the context.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

8. In the process of reading, I _____ find the biggest difficulty are unfamiliar words and complex grammar structure.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

9. In the process of reading, I_____ find the biggest difficulty is lack of background knowledge related

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

10. In the process of reading, I_____find that I know every word in the sentence but I don't make sense the whole sentence.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

11. In the process of reading, I ____ find that I read slowly.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

12. In the English reading course, our teacher _____help me to comprehend the passage through explaining the new words, grammar forms; words/sentence translating.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

13. I_____find these methods stated above are very helpful to my reading ability.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

14. During the reading course, the teacher_____tell us reading techniques.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

15. During the reading course, the teacher_____require us to preview some essays and books whose topics are related to the theme of the passage.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

16. During the reading course, the teacher_____teaches us to analyze the theme and rheme of each sentence to reach the goal of understand the passage better.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

17. I ____find these method stated above to some extent foster my reading ability.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

18. Before getting started to read, teachers will ____ask us some questions that related to the topic of the passage.

B. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

19. I ____find these methods stated above do some help to my reading ability.

A.   Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

20. During the reading course, the teacher ____introduces us the main points of views of the passage directly.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

21. I ____find these method stated above to some extent foster my reading ability.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

22. During the reading course, the teacher_____introduces the background knowledge of the passage.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

23. I ____find these method stated above to some extent foster my reading ability.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

24. Before getting started to read, teachers _____ requires us to predict the content of the passage according to the title.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never

25.   I _____ find these method stated above to some extent foster my reading ability.

A. Frequently B. always C. sometimes D. seldom E. never