Big Idea:

Two key factors involved in comprehending written language: Language is inherently ambiguous. People have to use logic to read well.

Developing readers often are stymied when confronted with some aspects of written language. In informational text for example, many developing readers are often unsure how to understand all the ideas within long and complex sentences even though these readers have the necessary prior knowledge. They may get some of the ideas at the beginning or the end of a long sentence, but rarely all that was intended by the author. Engaging language and logic focused reading strategy lessons can show learner how to "make a list" of the various ideas contained within a long sentence.

Similarly, sometimes developing readers do not assign meaning to pronouns in non-fiction texts. They are not sure, for example, what "it" means. Does "it" mean one of the three nouns mentioned in the preceding sentence or does "it" mean the idea presented at the end of the previous paragraph? And how does a person figure that out? Language and logic focused reading strategy lessons will show these readers how to make several logical predictions, refine their predictions, and then decide upon the meanings which seem to them most likely.

Sometimes developing readers may assign a "nickname" to the many proper nouns in informational texts, but they may not know what the proper nouns stand for in the text. They may not know, "Is this a person, a place, a thing or an idea? What kind of person, place, thing or idea? Skilled readers hunt for understandable clues surrounding the proper nouns to decide what kind of person, place or thing the proper noun represents, but developing readers may just give them nicknames without understanding their functions.

Language and logic focused reading strategy lessons that are fun and challenging can show developing readers to do both: assign a nickname, and scour the context for understandable clues to the meaning of the proper nouns: Oh, Mr. R is the owner of the dog! And Ms. B is the owner of the bakery! Got it!

I first learned about language focused, proficient reading strategy instruction in the seminal 1980 book, Reading Strategies: Focus on Comprehension by Yetta Goodman and Carolyn Burke. I found the language focused strategy lessons extraordinarily effective thirty years ago, and I still do today. Additionally, these strategies work with students of all ages.
Types of Language and Logic focused Strategy Lessons

For Readers at Beginning Levels:

These four reading strategy lessons are used with books at the readers’ levels, in terms of both concept and language—books that they would understand very well if the books were read to them:

- **Cloze**—helps readers deal with words they do not know.
- **Nicknaming**—invites learners to name each unfamiliar proper noun by its first letter as they work to figure out its function in the text.
- **Scattered Clues**—the most powerful of the strategies; creates a precise model of the reading process, teaching readers to make logical predictions and to constantly re-evaluate and adjust those predictions against the criteria of new information gathered from the text.
- **Paraphrasing**—putting what you have read in your own words; used in combination with all of the strategies presented here.

For Readers at More-Advanced Levels:

- **Nonsense**—answers the question, “What do I do when I only know very few of the words I am trying to read?”
- **Referents**—help readers keep track of the meaning of longer and more complicated sentences by helping them identify who or what pronouns refer to.
- **Unraveling**—teaches students the tricks of sentence-combining and how to reverse the process to “make a list” of the various ideas contained within a long and complex sentence.
- **Kerneling**—involves eliminating all but the essential elements (subject, verb, direct object) when trying to understand very challenging material.

Bibliography: