

**UNIVERZITA SV. CYRILA A METODA V TRNAVE**

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UNIVERZITA SV. CYRILA A METODA V TRNAVE

## **WORKING WITH TEXT**

**Workbook for students**

Gabriela Chmelíková

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Autorka:

Mgr. Gabriela Chmelíková, PhD.

Recenzenti:

Doc. PaedDr. Juraj Miština, PhD.

Doc. Mgr. Elena Kováčiková, PhD.

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## Preface

Nowadays, nobody would doubt the importance of reading, which is an inevitable human skill to acquire necessary information or knowledge. The reading itself, however, should not be understood in its limited or narrow meaning, i.e. that we read only the texts consisting of words, sentences, or paragraphs, or in other words that only books or newspapers are read. We read almost everywhere and almost constantly. Immediately after we get up: while getting up we check the time on the clock – *we read*, while preparing our breakfast we take our caffeine-free coffee from the shelf – *we read*, then checking the weather on the phone or on television as we are deciding what clothes to put on – *we read*. On our way to work we notice the travel agency's offer of last-minute trips – *we read*, then our phone rings, and as we miss the call, *we read* who has called... It is still morning, and we have already read a lot. Are we aware of that? We read not only novels or short stories, we read also letters, emails, text messages, newspapers, handbooks, recipes, advertisements, puzzles, rules for games, instructions, application forms, etc.

We can ask a question: why do we read? The answer is (F. Grellet, 2004, p. 4): we read for information and we read for pleasure. Reading for pleasure is not the aim of this workbook, we will look at reading for information, at reading comprehension and work with text in a class in particular.

We can also ask: how do we read? The main ways of reading are (F. Grellet, 2004, p. 4): fast reading techniques (scanning, skimming), extensive reading (longer texts, usually read for pleasure), and intensive reading (shorter texts to extract information). These ways of reading can be combined.

Reading in a foreign language, and particularly reading comprehension can be an issue for the students, therefore, it is trained at all types of education. Reading a text is usually an initial part of a typical foreign language lesson when a text is given by the textbook or by the teacher. Afterwards, a variety of activities are done, or training of selected language skills is prepared.

***The aim*** of this workbook is to bring an overview of the variety of possible activities in working with text. It can help not only the future teachers but also the other students.

***The workbook is structured*** in the following way: first, we will look at the basic terminology related to the reading and the text in a user-friendly way, such as different text types, selection of an appropriate text, reading techniques and strategies, or factors influencing reading which

can help understand that the reading itself is a quite complex skill and can be efficiently and purposefully trained, especially in terms of reading comprehension.

The workbook provides an illustration of how we can work with text and brings the variety of texts samples with the number of activities that can be done with the text so that it could be exploited as much as possible. These activities are complemented by assignments in which the students could think of a new possible activity, or how to integrate other skills: listening, speaking and writing. The sample texts are selected from the rich author's archive and some also from Grellet's inspirational book *Developing reading skills*.

The students will acquire an overview of the most frequent pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities, and bring thus incentives for enhancing or improving their working with text.

*Author*

## INTRODUCTION

Receptive skills – listening and reading proved to be the main means of new information acquisition in the mother tongue as well as in the foreign language. These skills, however, are not gained automatically, they have to be purposefully trained, especially in foreign language learning/teaching as it is without a doubt that reading literacy and reading comprehension are crucial competencies in the current knowledge society.

According to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – CEFR* (2006), each European Union citizen should be able to speak two world foreign languages at a minimum, one of them being universal, e.g. English, German or Spanish, plus the language of the neighbouring country). This means that both native and foreign language reading literacy are needed so that the European citizens could enhance their employability in the current European job market.

Mastering a foreign language is not the sign of an intellectual level or luxury – nowadays, it is the necessity of our everyday communication, e. g. for browsing the Internet sources, or watching/listening to foreign news. It is also important to focus on and train those language skills which will be used in one's future career, and reading skill is here considered to be the key one.

Although we consider reading a key language skill, this does not mean the other skills – listening, speaking or writing – are less important or should be neglected. Thanks to the variety of quality English textbooks, as well as a sufficient load of English lessons both at primary and secondary schools, the teacher can develop all of them proportionally or modify their improvement in compliance with the current needs or requirements.

Reading is sometimes – by students in particular – considered to be the simplest language skill, however, frequently also underestimated. The purpose of this workbook is to focus the attention of teachers or students on reading skill development and reading comprehension improvement.

## BASIC TERMINOLOGY

### Reading

For what reading is there are many definitions, and it is not easy to sum it up. A lot of research was carried out in the field. In general, reading is a human skill to process everything which is visually coded. This means, that the readers not only read the visually coded text and decipher it, they also think of the meaning of words and their mutual relationships, and on top of it, they have to decide how what they read relates to what they already know.

According to many linguists, reading cannot be precisely defined. *Grabe* (1991) and *Williams & Moran* (1989) say that reading is a selective process between the reader and the text, for *Goodman* (1982) reading is a psycholinguistic game, just to mention a few of the most significant linguists. From the 60s, the text represents the highest language level, and is dealt with by text linguistics, to mention at least two Slovak linguists, who are experts in the field, they are *Tandlichová* and *Gavora*.

To understand the reading process, we have to take into consideration the context (either intertextual or extratextual), i.e. a set of the reader's knowledge and skills. It is also necessary to distinguish between the process of reading and the results of the reading process – the product (Alderson, 2005). The reading is the interaction between a reader and the text, this process is dynamic and variable and can differ for the same reader on the same text at a different time or with a different purpose for reading. According to the Slovak linguists, *Mistrík* (1980, 1996) explains reading as the text perception in a wider context; the reader, while reading, weakens their attention to the letters themselves as the focus is shifted on the text perception – to the meaning of words. Also, *Gavora* (1992) calls reading the text perception, however, only in the case of conscious acquisition of the information written, according to him not every reading is the perception.

To sum up – and in compliance with the stance of renowned linguists *Alderson & Urquhart* (1989) – reading is a complex cognitive activity as it involves linguistic, psychological, sociological, information, communicative, and other aspects in which both hemispheres are involved (see Tasks 1 and 2 in ACTIVITY 1), and its precise definition is almost unrealistic.

The current approach to reading considers it in wider relations, not only as a reading skill solely, but as a reading literacy.

Reading literacy (Hrdináková, 2005) is the key for information literacy. To achieve information literacy, people have to realize when they need the information and be able to search for them,



process them, and utilise them. They learned how to learn since they know how the information is organized and where to look it for (Landová, 2002). As this description shows, it is obvious, that information literacy is not possible without adequate and functional reading literacy, i.e. without the ability to read, comprehend and process the information acquired. Besides technological, network, bibliographical, media, global, communicative and social literacy, it is also reading literacy that is very important for the current literate people. This reading literacy comprises:

- ability to read and comprehend,
- ability of critical thinking, comparison and differentiation of information,
- ability to process the information (e.g. extract, summarize, derive, etc.),
- ability to formulate new hypotheses, ideas,
- ability to distinguish untrue or lay information,
- ability of constant knowledge acquisition,
- ability to formulate own information needs and requirements.

The level of reading literacy is also measured in the international OECD research called PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) which is a triennial international survey aiming at evaluating the education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students in which the researchers measure their ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges. Within assessing the reading literacy, the remembering, comprehension, and specific and unspecific transfer are tested. Several aspects of reading literacy are researched: information acquisition, text interpretation, or the ability to critically process/analyse the text. For Slovakia, the results in reading were not that encouraging, it was lower than OECD average, plus, there was a decline since 2006. The results were among the lowest scores in comparison with other EU countries. The research pointed out the direct relevance of the decline in reading activities and the lower results in reading comprehension. In addition, although the surveys are conducted in other tongues, we do not have to idealise that the situation in reading in the English language would be better.

The previous PISA research showed that the reading comprehension of the Slovak students was not even on a satisfactory level (34<sup>th</sup> position with 466 points). Therefore, not only reading comprehension in the native language but also in a foreign language has to be trained and improved. The last PISA research was executed in 2021 and the results will be made public in December 2022.

## Text

The term of text comes from Latin origin *textere* (weave) as similarly as the woven material also the text joins letters, words, and sentences.

The text, its structure, properties, and tasks in the communication are subject to linguistic research. The discourse analysis within applied linguistics, i.e. the analysis of compact written or spoken discourse, is frequent.

It was mainly the *Prague School* and *Mathesius* who influenced the field, they said that the sentence is significant in terms of its intention and its current structuring is of great importance for the sentence itself.

Current linguistics does not consider the sentence to be the highest language unit, but the text as it is generally accepted. It is the communication produced either orally or in writing. The structure of the text is the subject of the scientific discipline called text linguistics).

The following table shows the variety of text types to be found in students' textbooks.

TEXT TYPES	NARRATIVE TEXTS	DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS	EXPOSITORY TEXTS	ARGUMENTATIVE TEXTS	DIRECTIVE TEXTS
<b>PURPOSE</b>	THEY TELL A STORY	THEY DESCRIBE A PLACE, PERSON OR THING	THEY INFORM, ANALYZE, EXPLAIN OR GIVE DETAILS ABOUT A TOPIC	THEY GIVE REASONS FOR A POINT OF VIEW TO TRY TO CONVINCE OTHERS OF IT	THEY GIVE INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO MAKE OR DO SOMETHING
<b>CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TEXTS MAY BE FICTIONAL (NOVELS, TALES...) OR NON-FICTIONAL (NEWSPAPER REPORTS, ROUTINES...)</li> <li>- THEY ARE CHARACTERISED BY A SEQUENCING OF EVENTS EXPRESSED BY DYNAMIC VERBS AND LINKING WORDS SUCH AS "FIRST", "AND THEN", "LATER"...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TEXTS SHOW RATHER THAN TELL THE READER WHAT SOMETHING OR SOMEONE IS LIKE</li> <li>- THEY USE MANY ADJECTIVES AND NOUNS</li> <li>- THEY ARE NORMALLY WRITTEN IN THE PRESENT OR PAST TENSES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- THEY CAN GIVE HISTORICAL, SCIENTIFIC OR ECONOMIC INFORMATION</li> <li>- THE VOCABULARY IS PRECISE AND SPECIFIC TO THE SUBJECT</li> <li>- THEY ARE NORMALLY WRITTEN IN THE PRESENT OR PAST TENSES</li> <li>- THEY MAY INCLUDE ILLUSTRATIONS, TABLES, GRAPHS...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TEXTS BEGIN WITH A SENTENCE THAT GIVES A POINT OF VIEW ON A TOPIC</li> <li>- THEY LIST ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST, GIVING REASONS AND EVIDENCE FOR DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW</li> <li>- TEXTS END WITH A CONCLUSION WHICH MIGHT SUM UP BOTH SIDES OR RECOMMEND ONE POINT OF VIEW</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TEXTS BEGIN WITH A STATEMENT OF GOAL (IT CAN BE THE TITLE)</li> <li>- THEY LIST MATERIALS NEEDED IN ORDER OF USE AND GIVE A SERIES OF STEPS (INSTRUCTIONS) IN ORDER</li> <li>- EACH INSTRUCTION BEGINS WITH A VERB IN THE PRESENT TENSE OR IMPERATIVE</li> </ul>
<b>EXAMPLES</b>	NOVELS SHORT STORIES NARRATIONS	LANDSCAPE/PEOPLE DESCRIPTIONS	ESSAYS TEXT BOOKS LECTURES	OPINION ARTICLES DEBATES	RECIPES INSTRUCTIONS MANUALS

Fig. 1. The variety of text types

Text can be explained in two ways. Some linguists take the text as a unit which can be described similarly as a sentence. The other group consider the text to be a unit oriented towards communication constituted by the organisation of the language action (Tandlichová, 1992). The other significant linguists in the field are as follows: *van Dijk*, *Widdowson*, *Dressler*, *Gal'perin*,

*de Beaugrande, Halliday*, and others. From the current linguists we can mention *David Crystal* (2008). According to him, texts are seen as language units with a definable communicative function characterised by such principles as cohesion, coherence, and informativeness which constitute their *textuality*.

“The seven principles of textuality – cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality – demonstrate how richly every text is connected to your knowledge of world and society, even a telephone directory” (de Beaugrande, 1989, p. 11-12). According to *Halliday* and *Hasan* (1989), language always exists in the form of a text, either spoken or written.

Linguists attribute the text to various properties, as seen above by *de Beaugrande* who called them principles. *Gavora* (1992), the Slovak linguist, introduces three properties:

- author’s communication objective – whether s/he informs, persuades, motivates, etc.,
- cohesion – as sentences are not isolated components, this is done via grammar and lexical and graphical means,
- coherence as a continuity of individual text parts.

## **Context**

The individual units do not explain or carry the communicative objective if they are not in a relationship with context. Context is considered as intertextual relations of language means within a sentence and among sentences.

It is a complex of elements present in the mind of a producer and their recipient in the course of their direct or indirect communication. And they are as follows: common knowledge, experience, approaches or opinions of the communication participants. *Van Dijk* (1977) mentioned even *supercontext* – a context in wider terms that includes the reader’s objectives and needs.

Language context and extratextual components play an important role in processing the information as the comprehension of specific information in detail or as a whole can be carried out only if the reader has besides language or general knowledge background also the specific knowledge. Regarding the variety of context situations, the same text can provide the same reader with different information.

## **Co-text**

Co-text is the information that is not executed verbally or visually but on the basis of circumstances, which in particular situations is evident or obvious. It is the content standing beyond the physical boundaries of text and context.

The explanation in *Oxford Reference* says that co-text means the word surrounding a particular word or passage within a text that provides context and helps determine meaning, i.e. co-text refers to information outside the text, which is available to the reader through understanding e.g. genre or situation.

Expert linguists in the field were: *Widdowson, Halliday* or *Mistrik*.

## **Pretext**

Pretext generally refers to the motive as the understanding of the text depends on the degree of the reader's linguistic and contextual knowledge that the author presumes the reader has. In addition, there is also the purpose of what the text is processed for.

Expert in the field: *Widdowson*.

## **Process and product of reading**

The process is an interaction of a reader and a text – the reader reads the text, decodes it and decides on its meaning. The reader can think of what s/he has read and how it relates to what s/he already knows, s/he can consider the text useful or useless, funny or boring.

As aforementioned, reading is a dynamic variable process and may differ even with the same reader depending on the purpose of reading. Within the reading process also the eye movements were studied (*Goodman, Smith*).

An alternative approach is represented by the study of the product of reading, where it is assumed that in spite of various readers and their different ways of reading, they should come to the approximately same result. In these studies, it is not important *how* the results are obtained. Studies in both areas – either related to the process as well as to the product – have their limitations.

From the Slovak linguists, it was *Mistrik* (1979, 1989) who was involved in several researches and explained that the process of reading starts with eye perception and also defines the width of the eye field of view (30° to the left and 30° to the right) and the height (up to 25° and down it is 10°). According to *Mistrik*, in reading it is important how big the read area is and how

long the lines are, i.e. the shorter the lines, the eye tires less. Optimally, the reader is capable to read the lines 9-10 cm long, with longer lines the eyes can unintentionally jump a line down or above. Regarding the research carried out by *Mistriik*, the reader's eye does not slide over the letters equally, in real, the reader's eyes make small jumps. The ideal distance of the read text from an eye is about 30 cm. The reading is also influenced by such things as the type of paper, whether the text is printed or written, the typeface, the size of the typeface, colours, etc.

## **Models of reading**

Sources mention several models:

- psycholinguistic, reflecting the cognitive nature of human behaviour (*Goodman, Smith*),
- schematic, reflecting the scheme (*Bartlett, Coady*); according to this model, comprehension depends on the readers' ability to integrate information from the text read with their own knowledge background,
- language-oriented, where the language and training in structuring the text represent the aim, not the means (*Barber*),
- cognitive can be characterised as comprehension of sequences in short-term memory and text representation as episodic information in long-term memory (*van Dijk, Alderson*).

There are also three models for processing the text:

- bottom-up theory, where the reader builds the text from the smallest components, from letters through words and to sentences,
- top-down theory, where the reader brings into the reading process own anticipations, assumptions and can utilise prediction and integrates the information read into own linguistic, cultural, social knowledge,
- interactive school – theory mostly supported, stating that both models are used in the process of reading.

## **Factors influencing reading**

Reading is influenced by several factors; the following three are the most important:

- *reader* - the reader influences how deep s/he is involved in the process of reading. The approaches differ with each reader, depending on their previous experience. The information the reader brings into the reading process comes from various sources of

experience. The most important influential sources, we can mention the following: family, society, education, culture, and the individuality of a reader including their physical and mental state.

- *text* - not represented only by reading books or newspapers, or any general written text. We read almost constantly and almost everywhere. The text is static and the reader has to accommodate to the text, not vice versa. The knowledge the reader has of different text types can help them adjust own anticipations and skills to the text just read. These factors (not artistic texts) can help in text comprehension: visual organisation of information, syntax, and grammar as well as the register used.

- *interaction of reader and text* - the reader and the text are two necessary parts of the reading process. If they interact, there is the reading. Nevertheless, the text can be understood in a different way than it was intended by the author; also two readers can understand it differently. These differences stem from the aforementioned factors. There is an interaction between the purpose and way of reading as the purpose determines the way of reading. Then, there is the interaction via the reading strategy when the experienced readers utilise the following strategic actions: differentiate the words, make use of titles and subtitles, utilise own background knowledge, identify grammar functions, analyse unknown words, concentrate on words' meaning and estimation of meaning, continuously monitor the text comprehension, are aware of their purpose of reading, can identify the main idea, understand the relations of text parts, are capable of paraphrasing, or utilise the context to understand the text as a whole, etc. Finally, there is the interaction via the text structure since each reader brings his or her own knowledge of text structuring.

### **Factors influencing reading in a foreign language**

In some features, reading in mother tongue is in some features similar to reading in a foreign language, and although we may tend to think the reading competence in native language influences the reading competence in a foreign language, there have been some studies pointing out that sometimes this influence can be quite insignificant.

Reading in a foreign language is often considered to be a required academic skill and a prerequisite for professional success as a massive amount of information is published in foreign languages.

Reading in a foreign language is subject to linguistic research all over the world, and the researchers e.g. question whether reading is only a matter of mastering the vocabulary and

grammar of the target language, or whether there are also further difficulties to encounter. Some other scholars say that success in reading in a foreign language depends on reading competence in their mother tongue, others, for instance, *Goodman* (1973) state that the process of reading remains the same in whatever language we read. *Grabe* (1991) states that the students begin to read in a foreign language with different knowledge than they have when they learned to read in their native language, knowing more words and distinguishing various grammar structures. According to various scientists' research such as *Alderson* (1984), *Grabe* (1986, 1991), we can mention the following factors influencing reading in a foreign language:

- *knowledge level and orientation at the time of beginning reading in a foreign language*, the readers enter the process of reading at different ages with relevant background knowledge and individual learning style,
- *acquired mother tongue level* – reflecting the transfer of reading skills in the mother tongue into a foreign language,
- *knowledge of structures in the native language* – it is clear that e.g. a ten-year-old reader not knowing all grammar structures will have a different approach to the text in English than a 20-year old student whose knowledge of grammar is richer,
- *acquired foreign language level* – which influences the choice of the texts for reading and purpose of reading,
- *difference between mother tongue and foreign language*; this reflects on language families. It is obvious that it is easier to study English when you are a German-speaking person, but for such a person it may be rather difficult to study e. g. Chinese, i. e. the language from a different language family,
- *cultural background* – one of the most influential factors that include the following: attitude to the text and purpose of reading; reading technique and strategy used for reading in the mother tongue and the reading technique and strategy used for reading in a foreign language (here the requirements may differ, e.g. for migrants); knowledge of the variety of formats and registers; background knowledge.

### **Cohesion and coherence**

Cohesion and coherence are two properties used in discourse analysis and text linguistics to determine the quality of any written content to make sure it is understandable, in other words, the ideas are conveyed through written sentences comprising logical transitions. If we can use

a metaphor, then coherence is a building and cohesion are the bricks of which the building is built.

Cohesion (a quantitative and measurable property) is the author's responsibility, *cohere* means to stick together, coherence frames the sentences and phrases and focuses on lexical syntax and grammar. Coherence is determined by the reader, i.e. if s/he understands the text. If coherence is achieved – understood – then the text is cohesive as well. Cohesion is a subset of coherence. How can be coherence (a qualitative and not measurable property) achieved? The author uses various means: topic sentences, repeated words, reference words, transition signals, substitution, and ellipsis. It is the logical organisation of sentences to form meaningful and understandable content.

To sum it simply up, cohesion focuses on grammatical and lexical structure of sentences whereas coherence deals with semantics to make the text understandable.

To make the text understandable we use logical bridges. If there is no logical connection between sentences in a paragraph, the text can lose its understandability. Here are some illustrations:

“After dark, on the warrenlike streets of Brooklyn where *I* live, *I* often see women who fear the worst from *me*. *They* seem to have set *their* faces on neutral, and with *their* purse straps strung across *their* chests bandolier-style, *they* forge ahead as though bracing themselves against being tackled. *I* understand, of course, that the danger *they* perceive is not a hallucination. Women are particularly vulnerable to street violence, and young black males are drastically overrepresented among the perpetrators of that violence. Yet *these* truths are no solace against the kind of alienation that comes of being ever the suspect, a fearsome entity with *whom* pedestrians avoid making eye contact.”

In the sample text, we can clearly see the role the pronouns play in the text and can understand that the pronouns *they* or *their* refer to the word *streets*. Without these pronouns, the text will be less understandable.

In the following two examples, you can see how the text is less understandable if the logical transition words are omitted. The first one is used without any transition words, the other one uses them. Compare.



“Medical science has succeeded in identifying the hundreds of viruses that can cause the common cold. It has discovered the most effective means of prevention. One person transmits the cold viruses to another most often by hand. An infected person covers his mouth to cough. He picks up the telephone. His daughter picks up the telephone. She rubs her eyes. She has a cold. It spreads. To avoid colds, people should wash their hands often and keep their hands away from their faces.”

“Medical science has *thus* succeeded in identifying the hundreds of viruses that can cause the common cold. It has *also* discovered the most effective means of prevention. One person transmits the cold viruses to another most often by hand. *For instance*, an infected person covers his mouth to cough. *Then* he picks up the telephone. *Half an hour later*, his daughter picks up the same telephone. *Immediately afterwards*, she rubs her eyes. *Within a few days* she, *too*, has a cold. *And thus* it spreads. To avoid colds, *therefore*, people should wash their hands often and keep their hands away from their faces.”

We can clearly see that the other text using transition words is more understandable. It is important to teach the students to focus on these words or expressions while reading a text and make them understand their role – the role of coherence.

To conclude, coherence means that the reader is able to clearly follow the flow of words and ideas. The used transition words serve to connect and organize the ideas.

## **Paragraph**

Another useful practice is to teach the students to pay attention to how the paragraphs are built. A paragraph is a collection of related sentences dealing with a single topic. The basic rule is that there should be one idea in one paragraph. There we have the topic sentence, supporting sentences and concluding sentences.

Try to focus the students' attention to the topic sentence(s) which is usually the first sentence of the paragraph and which contains the main idea.

Example: *There are three reasons why Canada is one of the best countries in the world.* (Topic sentence).

The paragraph then usually continues with supporting sentences that develop, explain or support the main idea. They contain facts, examples, or details.

Example: *First, Canada has an excellent health care system. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Finally, Canada's cities are ...* (Supportive sentences).

Finally, the paragraph usually has also a concluding sentence(s) restating the main idea. It is used to finish the paragraph or prepare the reader for the following paragraph.

Example: *As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live. For those reasons, Canada attracts a lot of immigrants.* (Concluding sentences).

Note, that these sentences are interlinked by 'verbal bridges' - as aforementioned in the part related to cohesion and coherence.

Look at a different example of how the paragraph looks as a whole, with the topic, supportive and concluding sentences. The topic and concluding sentences are written in italics.

Example: *Through the centuries rats have managed to survive all our efforts to destroy them.* We have poisoned them and trapped them. We have fumigated, flooded, and burned them. Some rats even survived atomic bomb tests conducted on the volcano in the Pacific after World War II. *In spite of all our efforts, these enemies of ours continue to prove that they are the most indestructible of pests.*

(Examples taken from <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/transitions.htm>)

## WAYS TO ENHANCE READING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND READING COMPREHENSION IMPROVEMENT

### 1 Utilisation of reading models

Regarding the models of reading, or in other words, understanding the text scheme, it can be said that most of the readers (students) are aware of typical text structure: starting from the introduction through the main core text to the conclusion within the main scheme formats. The knowledge then helps the students orient better in the reading process.

Knowing the models of reading can be very useful when reading a specific text as, without a proper understanding of the topic, the reader is not able to identify the text *macrostructures* and their mutual relations. The full comprehension of the text is possible or at least much easier with appropriate linguistic knowledge. Therefore, it is very useful to train the students to be sensitive to the text structure.

There are the following prerequisites for valued reading:

- linguistic knowledge,

- knowledge of text structure,
- background knowledge.

Here we have to mention that the knowledge of text structure is often very low or even missing.

If the prerequisites are called *macroskills*, then the *microskills* could be as follows:

- prediction,
- anticipation,
- estimation of unknown words (due to context).

## 2 Utilisation of linguistic knowledge

The main prerequisite for reading a text is such a level of the language competence which allows further linguistic knowledge development, i.e. at least the basic knowledge of morphology, lexicology, syntax, and stylistics. The self-assessment grid within the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) can be helpful if we want to discuss this knowledge to what extent it is necessary.

For students' reading comprehension it is beneficial if they:

- can identify the text genre,
- can identify the organisation of text construction,
- has knowledge of structure and functions,
- can understand cohesive and coherent relations in the text,
- can understand semantic relations in the text.

If students can identify the *organisation of text construction*, at least as follows:

- the introductory sentence/s of the first paragraph carries/carry the main idea,
- the following paragraphs develop/support the topic,
- the last sentence of the closing paragraph usually generalises the topic,

then they can orient in the text with very lower difficulties.

### 3 Utilisation of lexical knowledge

Here we mean the way how to lower the dependence on dictionaries. Many students still keep on the opinion that the unknown words can be translated only by their help as they do not / are notable to distinguish between essential words crucial for overall understanding and the words whose meaning is only supportive, and which do not have to be necessarily translated. The meaning of these supportive words can be often easily estimated *due* to the context or *due* to basic knowledge of derivation, suffixes, and prefixes.

For some students, the estimation of the meaning of the unknown words can be trained e. g via *pre-reading activities*, by using the word in a different and known context, or by the means of antonyms, or synonyms, and let the dictionary be the last choice. Sometimes, it is also helpful to wait until the post-reading exercises/activities, which may make unclear the meaning understandable. The schemes, videos, or non-verbal means can support the estimation of the meaning as well.

As aforementioned, for lexical guessing the meaning of an unknown word, at least the basics of word-formation is necessary, i.e. derivation – suffixes and prefixes, conversion of parts of speech, or compound words, and thus the student should know:

- the most used prefixes (e.g. *mis-* in *miscalculation*, or *dis-* in *disappear*),
- the most used suffixes (e.g. *-ness* in *roughness*, or *-ity* in *conductivity*),
- conversion of parts of speech in the English language (e.g. *step* or *force* can be nouns or verbs depending on the particular context),
- formation of compound words (e.g. *turnover* is of different meaning its components *turn* and *over*).

### 4 Utilisation of reading techniques

Currently, the amount of information grow exponentially. If we take into consideration also the boost of the Internet, and the growth of e-media, it means that if a reader wants to manage at least his/her job-related information, s/he should read a huge number of pages of information, which is a “mission impossible“.

It is up to the reader to decide how to manage such an amount of information. The present days are rich in utilising various ICT gadgets, however, one of the most important ways of how to improve information management is a good selection of reading techniques.

Last research, as well as specialised surveys (e.g. PISA), have shown the importance of good reading techniques as an inevitable part of reading literacy since the Slovak students' results in reading comprehension were quite low.

Regarding the reading techniques, it is necessary to notice that we do not mean reading for study purposes or reading poetry which is a completely different issue.

Before the reading itself is started, the *pre-reading activities* can be applied, the students can predict what the text will be about. As they read, they can continuously monitor and check whether their expectations are met. If text comprehension is endangered, the students can modify their reading techniques, read a particular part of the text once more, or use a dictionary, etc.

By these reading techniques, the reader should:

- identify the key words in the first sentences of paragraphs,
- determine which words carry the main topic,
- determine which words carry a specific secondary aspect of the topic,
- identify the most important words in each sentence,
- identify the relations of the related information,
- be able to introduce examples,
- be able to search details in the text,
- identify the conclusion of the topic in the text.

There are several classifications of useful reading techniques and there are many linguists involved in their research: *Widdowson, Anderson, Hyland, or Mistrík*.

Here are the most used ones:

- *skimming* – fast reading technique when the reader can guess the text content by knowing the text structure, e.g. if the reader knows that the most important sentence in the text is the first one, then it can help a lot. The reader can skip consciously up to 75% of the text. It is quite an appreciated reading technique as particularly this could help

the reader decide whether to read the text or not. The basic knowledge – at least – of text structure is essential here, the reader should know how the main formats within genres are composed. The better the reader understands the text structure, the more easily s/he can orient in it.

The following figure graphically illustrates the reading technique of skimming. Look carefully at the paragraphs and sentences underlined.

### What is Capitalism?

The word capitalism is now quite commonly used to describe the social system in which we now live. It is also often assumed that it has existed, if not forever, then for most of human history. In fact, capitalism is a relatively new social system. For a brief historical account of how capitalism came into existence a couple of hundred years ago, see Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto. But what exactly does 'capitalism' mean?

#### Class division

Capitalism is the social system which now exists in all countries of the world. Under this system, the means for producing and distributing goods (the land, factories, technology, transport system etc) are owned by a small minority of people. We refer to this group of people as the capitalist class. The majority of people must sell their ability to work in return for a wage or salary (who we refer to as the working class.)

The working class are paid to produce goods and services which are then sold for a profit. The profit is gained by the capitalist class because they can make more money selling what we have produced than we cost to buy on the labour market. In this sense, the working class are exploited by the capitalist class. The capitalists live off the profits they obtain from exploiting the working class whilst reinvesting some of their profits for the further accumulation of wealth.

#### The profit motive

In capitalism, the motive for producing goods and services is to sell them for a profit, not to satisfy people's needs. The products of capitalist production have to find a buyer, of course, but this is only incidental to the main aim of making a profit, of ending up with more money than was originally invested. This is not a theory that we have thought up but a fact you can easily confirm for yourself by reading the financial press.

The capitalists calculate can be sold at a profit. Those goods may satisfy human needs but those needs will not be met if people do not have sufficient money.

Attentively  
read the first  
and the last  
paragraphs

Read only the  
first sentence.  
“Drop down”  
to the end,  
looking for  
key details

Fig. 2 Illustration of the skimming reading technique (<https://toeflmaterial.com/skimming-and-scanning/> retrieved on 22 Feb 2022)

- *scanning* – is fast reading when the reader looks only for specific data, e.g. names, numbers, or symbols, i. e. the reader can practically omit the text itself. The technique

is recommended especially when s/he has to go through an amount of data in which s/he needs to get oriented as soon as possible.

The following figure shows graphically which items the reader can focus on depending on the information or key words s/he is looking for. Look at the circled items in the figure (Figure 3).

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**The profit motive**

In capitalism, the motive for producing goods and services is to sell them for a **profit** not to satisfy people's needs. The products of capitalist production have to find a buyer, of course, but this is only incidental to the main aim of making a profit, of ending up with more money than was originally invested. This is not a theory that we have thought up but a fact you can easily confirm for yourself by reading the financial press. Production is started not by what consumers are prepared to pay for to satisfy their needs but by what the capitalists calculate can be sold at a profit. Those goods may satisfy human needs but those needs will not be met if people do not have sufficient money.

*You look for specific keywords*

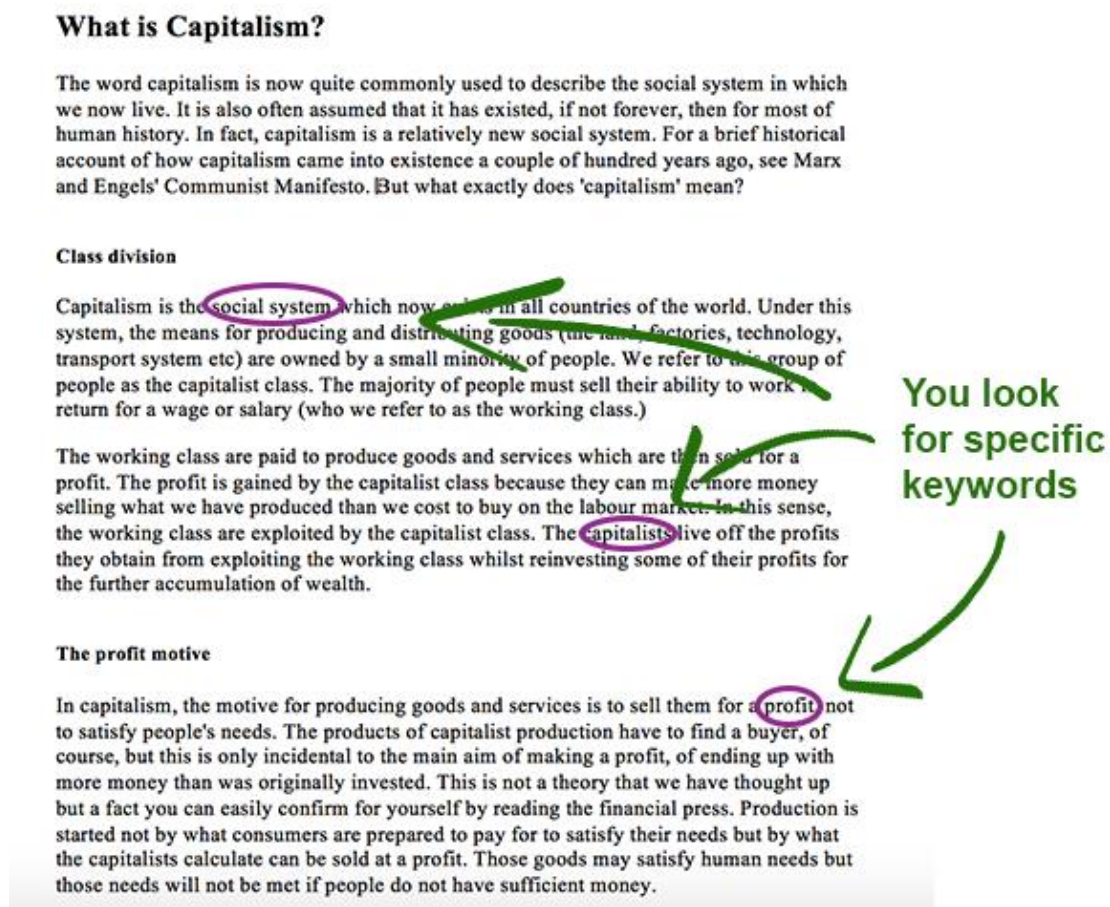


Fig. 3 Illustration of scanning reading technique (<https://toeflmaterial.com/skimming-and-scanning/> retrieved on 15 Feb 2022)

- *surveying* – the technique for an efficient survey of the text content and its organisation where the reference data are particularly utilised. Here we look for the title, subtitle, details about the author, and data of publication, abstract, preface, table of contents, references, index, blurb, or reviewers' comments. The technique is very useful especially when multiple sources are available.

- *reading for gist* – fast reading to get the general information and formulate the main idea. This is often called also skimming by some linguists.

The students should train the first three techniques – skimming, scanning and surveying and they should be also aware of the fact that it is useful to vary the reading technique according to the purpose of reading.

To understand the text, it is recommended to utilise some pre-reading activities before applying the reading techniques; the students can set their own predictions or guess its content. During the reading, they can monitor and check whether the expectations are fulfilled. In case the text is not understood well, they can still go back and read the passage again or look for the explanation of the words or phrases the students do not understand.

Post-reading activities are strongly recommended to be used after applying any of the reading techniques. We should also consider the appropriate text selection as not all texts are suitable for training the reading techniques.

## 5 Utilisation of reading strategies

The distinction between the reading technique and the reading strategy is in the utilisation of what is read. If the reading technique is purposefully selected and utilised, we speak about strategy, i.e. the reading technique is a part of the reading strategy.

There are several known and frequently used reading strategies and are used also for study purposes in many subjects. The strategies can be combined. These are best-known reading/learning strategies:

- SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite (Recall), Review) – the strategy is based on pre-reading and retelling the text (introduced by F. P. Robinson, 1946),
- PLAN (Predict, Locate, Add, Note) – based on mind mapping the key words, localizing the known and unknown passages; *Predict* the content and structure of the text and assess its potential, *Locate* – information known/unknown, *Add* – words or phrases to the map to explain the new information or to confirm/extend the already known information (*while reading*), *Note* – the new understanding gained and use it (*post*),



- KWL – is the strategy based on three pillars: what you know, what you want to know and what have you learned (introduced by D. Ogle in 1990). This strategy is mostly used with young learners.
- Compare and Contrast – with Compare strategy we have to look at what have the people, things or places in common and in what features they differ. For better comparison often graphical processing, e.g. the Venn diagram is used. For the Contrast strategy, we focus only on differences.
- 3-2-1 – this is the strategy where the students have to fill out 3 things they found out, 2 interesting things and prepare 1 question. The strategy is to involve the students in reading and thus improve their text comprehension. The strategy is also used mostly with young learners.

There are even more sources commenting on reading strategies that mention the following: using or activating prior knowledge, predicting, identifying the main idea, questioning, making inferences, visualizing, summarizing, making story maps, retelling, selecting, and others.

## 6 Suitable text selection

To select a suitable text for teaching English is subject to several factors; the most important are the following ones:

- purpose – i.e. dependence on the specific task we will use the text for,
- target group – obviously, the teacher selects a different text for the students' lower language level, here we have also considered the length of the text so that the space for other activities is also left.

The other factors determining the text selection are: e.g. text exploitability – some texts might look attractive at first sight; however, after reading, only a few post-reading activities are possible and the text cannot be exploited as the teacher might have expected. The other influencing factors are text content, text structure and its suitability, i.e. the teachers should avoid a topic which is too well-known or completely unknown, as well as they should avoid duplicate texts (reading something what might have been already read and just repeating what the students already know). The authenticity of the text selected as well as the register, text difficulty, etc. can be included in factors influencing reading.

Authenticity is one of the most interesting and influencing factors when selecting a suitable text. Sometimes, it is very difficult to select a text which is purely authentic, it can be too long,

or full of useless words, and therefore, we have to adjust the text according to our purposes. We have also to consider if the text/context is known or not. Sometimes, also a specific amount of help for the reader has to be considered and adjust the text of instructions.

The last thing to eliminate or admit is *teacher's help to the student reader*, or at least set the extent of such help. The teacher should monitor the reading process of their students and can assist when sometimes the readers come across an unknown expression.

There are several other minor influencing factors when selecting the text:

- complementary materials (figures, graphs, maps, etc.) which can be helpful in understanding the text to be read,
- title, subtitle (e.g. utilised for pre-reading activities – prediction),
- environment of the room used for reading (can be either motivating or demotivating),
- specific occasions or circumstances (e.g. anniversary can be beneficial),
- internal coherence of texts (we cannot select the fourth part of eight parts),
- knowledge potential of the teacher ( who does not have to be an expert in all fields), etc.

Last but not least, students' *motivation* should not be omitted. The better they are motivated, the better the results. Therefore, the texts should be selected in a way, they could identify with them.

## 7 Use of reading activities

Why should we implement reading activities? Research showed that students whose teachers spend too much time talking are less likely to be engaged, i. e. we have to involve the students as much as possible. The work with text and reading should not be done in isolation but together with other skills. If we do not practice reading for fluency, we can use the activities to get the students engaged. There are numerous reading activities that can be used with reading and they are usually divided into pre-reading, while-reading, post-reading and follow-up reading activities.

*Pre-reading* activities include:

- predicting upon pictures, keywords, title,
- describing pictures,

- reorganising pictures,
- discussion about the topic,
- brainstorming,
- selecting key words,
- “Tarantino” activity – the teacher reads the last paragraph or sentences and let the students predict what happens throughout the beginning or in the middle,
- “spoiler” activity – let the students to scan the text fast for some words that pop up and then guess what is the story about.

*While-reading* activities:

- reading aloud (as individuals or pair work for dialogues). Note: reading aloud is strongly recommended as it helps develop and improve not only reading skills but the other language skills as well (not mention the importance of correct pronunciation training),
- identifying incorrect word (teacher’s or student’s ones),
- finding synonyms, antonyms,
- quiz reading (e.g. find all words starting with “b”),
- underlying specific grammar items (e.g. tenses),
- role play – teacher selects the students for reading the parts of the characters and the part of the narrator,
- skip words from the text and let the students fill them,
- scramble the text and let the students put it in the correct order,
- stop before the end and let the students finish the story/text.

*Post-reading* activities:

- summarizing the text,
- retelling the text (this can be done individually or with all students together when each student says just a sentence),
- making questions,
- answering comprehension questions,
- rewriting the text,
- paraphrasing the text,
- preparing a quiz,
- jig-saw reading – the same as while-reading activity, scrambled parts of a text have to be put in the correct order,
- title each paragraph of the story/text,

- alternate ending – let the students write,
- interview – let the students interview one of the characters,
- write a letter to one of the characters (e.g. with some advice or question),
- true/false exercise,
- multiple-choice exercise,
- gap filling,
- matching exercise,
- make sentences with new vocabulary,
- replacing some words with synonyms,
- cohesion/coherence training – let the students underline all pronouns and tell what they refer to,
- grammar training – let the students find e.g. all irregular verbs and use them in all tenses and in new sentences,
- etc.

*Follow-up activities:*

- using the knowledge from the text,
- implementing the knowledge also within other subjects.

As you can see, there are plenty of activities that can be done when working with text and you can complement the list of activities with other ideas – there is a lot of inspiration to be found on various Internet sources. The teacher should not be discouraged if some of the activities do not work and could try it with a different group of students and also find out which of the activities work best with particular groups.

There are many benefits of reading activities:

- *pre-reading activities* – help the students be more prepared for the topic,
- *while-reading activities* – can bring more concentration on aspects of the text,
- *post-reading activities* – contribute to deeper understanding, information and knowledge organization as well as its useful and successful later retrieval,
- *follow-up activities* – prove the sustainability of gained knowledge.

## 8 Use of reading games

The purpose of including reading games is obvious. We want to make reading an enjoyable activity. The more the reading or activity is enjoyable, the more the students get engaged. It is known that the use of games in teaching reading may be more suitable for young learners, but secondary school students are likely to appreciate them.

The benefits of including reading games are indisputable. They can reduce tension or stress, make the learning environment more comfortable and as an added value they can also build relationships with students. The games can speed up the response time, encourage teamwork, stimulate creativity, improve critical thinking, etc. You can find inspiration on the Internet, then do not forget that sometimes they call the game and activity. However, any activity can be made enjoyable as well.

Here are some useful examples, tips for reading games:

- to train vocabulary: divide students in groups. You will need cards – you can prepare different words from the text the students have just read and ask them to write as many synonyms as possible, or use them in new sentences, etc. The group that has written more items, sentences, wins.
- to train vocabulary: scrabble – divide students into groups of 3-5 people. Each student donates the first and the last letters of their first names and surnames written on cards. Together they prepare as many words of these letters as possible. The group with the most words wins.
- etc.

Do not worry if the game or enjoyable activity includes other skills, the more language skills are engaged, the better.

## 9 Other ways to boost reading skills

The teachers can motivate their students to read not only the English texts in their textbooks but also encourage them to start reading e.g. the following:

- *bilingual parallel texts*, where on one side is an English text and on the other, there is the translation in Slovak. This is a very good way for those who love reading and do not want to stop looking for unknown words,

- *newspapers, magazines, online news*, nowadays there are many websites and online sources for reading, here not only the students practice reading in English but they also obtain new information,
- *blogs* – similar to the previous source, there are plenty of blogs on the Internet that relate to a variety of themes – traveling, fashion, psychology, etc.
- *subtitles* – another great option as almost all students like watching films, current technologies allow this possibility for many films,
- *fiction literature* – for enthusiastic readers there are also adapted versions if they do not want to read the full length version (Penguin editions are adjusted to many language levels).

### **Potential issues in reading**

Reading is said to be the least simple skill, however, the students frequently make the same mistakes which are as follows:

- reading word by word, the reader focuses too much on the meaning of a single word and not on the meaning of a phrase or sentence,
- paying too much emphasis to grammar structures (at the expense of text content comprehension),
- too much concern about the details (at the expense of understanding the main idea,
- relying on the dictionary,
- low relevant knowledge.

The following are potential troubles related to reading:

- *not understanding the meaning of the word*, which is unknown or known but used in a different context,
- *not understanding the sentence* – words are understood, but the sentence is not, or the sentence is understood only partially, or there are more explanations to the sentence comprehension and the student cannot decide about the correct one, or the interpretation of the sentence does not correspond with student's background knowledge,
- *not understanding the relations among sentences* - the interpretation of understanding one sentence is in contradiction with the other one, or the student cannot find interconnections of sentences, or the student has understood there is more than one relation among the sentences,

- *not understanding the text structure* - student is not able to identify the main idea of the paragraph/ text, or the student does not understand specific parts of the text or does not understand the acts of characters (relates mainly to literary texts).

Not all the difficulties that might occur in the reading process are always caused by the reader, it can be also caused by *low text readability*. Some texts are read easily, some are not. Many linguists have tried to set objective criteria for measuring text readability. In Slovak linguistics, it was *Mistik* (1977) who introduced a formula for text readability calculation in his *Stylistics of the Slovak language*.

There are also several online engines that can measure the text readability after inserting the appropriate text ([www.readable.io](http://www.readable.io), or [www.readabilityformulas.com](http://www.readabilityformulas.com)). More or less they deal with the following: average text length, number of difficult words, number of personal nouns, percentage of unique words and others.

#### ACTIVITY 1 *Getting into working with text*

**Within working with text we can include also fun activities – readings – to show the students how complex the reading skill is. We will provide some best known exercises for processing the reading text and reading comprehension development, and also look at how many possible exercises the students already know for working with text.**

**The students are asked what specific aim for each of the tasks they would formulate and what skills in their opinion are necessary to master the task.**

**Fun reading 1. Test your hemispheres.**

**YELLOW BLUE ORANGE BLACK RED GREEN PURPLE YELLOW RED  
GREEN ORANGE BLACK PURPLE BLUE GREEN BLUE ORANGE RED**

## Fun reading 2. Try to read the text. Can you prepare a similar text in English?

● Pdoľa vskýmuu jnedej agiclnkej uvenizitry, názeželí na tom, ako sú unoležé pesímná v solve, jinedá delôtižá vec je, že pvré a psodlené je na snárpovm meitse. Zšyovk mžôe byť tlátomy choas, no vy to sláte dákoteže bez pmélrobov pčetriáť. To ptero, že netičame každé pesmíno smosatante, ale svolo ako cleok.

### Task 1. Read the text.

#### THE STORY OF COKE

What is the most recognizable object in the world? Could it be a football? Or a Big-Mac? No, the answer is a Coca-Cola bottle. The famous Coca-Cola bottle is more than 100 years old!

People know and drink Coca-Cola all over the world.

It is said that the Coca-Cola bottle is the most recognised object in the world. Hundreds of millions of people can recognise a Coke bottle by its shape, even if they cannot see it! And the famous Coca-Cola logo is the most famous logo in the world. Unlike any other famous logo, it has not changed in 100 years!

But the story of Coca-Cola is even older than that. It was in 1886 that John Pemberton, a druggist in Atlanta, Georgia, invented a new type of syrup, using coca leaves, sugar and cola nuts, plus a few other secret ingredients! Pemberton sold it as a medicine; and with its coca (the source of cocaine), it must have made people feel good!

Nevertheless, Pemberton's medicine was not very successful, so he sold his secret formula to another druggist, Asa Candler. Candler was interested because he had another idea; he thought that Pemberton's "medicine" would be much better if it was mixed with soda. Candler was thus the man who really invented the drink Coca-Cola. At first, he sold it in his drugstore; then he began selling the syrup to other drugstores, who used it with their soda fountains. Candler also advertised his new drink, and soon people were going to drugstores just to get a drink of Coca-Cola.



Before long, other people became interested in the product, including a couple of businessmen who wanted to sell it in bottles. Candler sold them a license to bottle the drink, and very quickly the men became millionaires. The famous bottle, with its very distinctive shape, was designed in 1916.

During the First World War, American soldiers in Europe began asking for Coca-Cola, so the Coca-Cola Company began to export to Europe. It was so popular with soldiers that they then had to start bottling the drink in Europe. Today, Coca-Cola is made in countries all over the world, including Russia and China; it is the world's most popular drink.

As for the famous formula, it is probably the world's most valuable secret! The exact ingredients for making Coca-Cola are only known to a handful of people. And as for the "coca" that was in the original drink that was eliminated in 1903. It was a drug, and too dangerous. Today's Coca-Cola contains caffeine, but not cocaine!

**Task 2. Put the paragraphs in correct order so that they correspond with the previous text about Coke. What aim do you think we have? What skills do you think are or can be involved?**

*Specific aim: ? Skills involved: ?*

### **THE STORY OF COKE – Part 2**

1 ..... Coca-Cola had to develop a bottling system and set up plants. The first bottling plant opened in Vicksburg in 1894 and over the next 25 years, the number of plants rose from two to over a thousand. Other soft drink companies tried to imitate the Coca-Cola taste so the company kept the drink's formula secret and searched for a distinctive package. In 1916, they introduced the first bottle with the famous Coca-Cola shape.

2 ..... Then the United States joined the war, and the company President gave an order 'to see that every man in uniform gets a bottle of Coca-Cola for 5 cents, wherever he is and whatever the cost to the company.' As a result, Coca-Cola shipped 64 bottling plants abroad during the war. And when the war finished, they were ready to conquer the world. From the mid-1940s until 1960, the number of countries with bottling plants nearly doubled.

3 ..... .. He distributed thousands of coupons for a complimentary glass of Coca-Cola and he promoted the drink with souvenir fans, calendars, clocks, and novelties. Sales rose dramatically and, by 1892, they were ten times their 1888 level.

4 ..... Dr. John Styth Pemberton made it in his backyard, took it to his local pharmacy, and they put it on sale at 5 cents a glass. Hand-painted signs saying 'Coca-Cola' appeared outside the store and inside signs invited customers to 'Drink'. But sales didn't take off. In the first year, they sold just 9 drinks a day.

5 ..... This was the first change in the secret formula since 1886. In pre-launch tests, consumers preferred the new taste. However, the tests couldn't measure their feelings for the brand. Coca-Cola had a special place in their hearts and they didn't want a change. For the first time in history, sales of Coca-Cola fell. The company responded quickly and marketed the original formula again as Coca-Cola Classic. Sales climbed back up again, and continued to grow.

6 ..... He thought it would never be very successful and he steadily sold his shares in the business to different partners. In 1888, just before he died, he sold his last shares to Asa. G. Candler, a businessman from Atlanta.

**Task 3. The first sentence of each paragraph is missing. Read the article carefully and decide where each sentence goes. Fill in the number into the text. What aim do you think we have? What skills do you think are or can be involved?**

*Specific aim: ? Skills involved: ?*

1 Asa Candler had a talent for marketing.

2 In the 1980s, in the USA only, the company launched a new taste for Coke.

3 In 1941, there were bottling plants in 44 countries.

4 Coca-Cola was invented in Atlanta, Georgia on May 8, 1886.

5 The huge increase in the popularity of the drink led to problems meeting demand.

6 Dr. Pemberton didn't see the potential of his new drink.

**Task 4. Are the following statements true or false?**

1 Dr. Pemberton sold his shares before he died

T / F

2 The President of the USA wanted every soldier to have a bottle of Coca-Cola for 5 cents wherever the soldier was. T / F

3 The power of promotion boosted the sales of Coke. T / F

4 The Coca-Cola Company has never tried to make changes in the secret formula of the favourite soft drink. T / F

**Task 5. Make questions to the following answers. What aim do you think we have? What skills do you think are or can be involved?**

*Specific aim: ? Skills involved: ?*

1 .....  
?

Dr. Pemberton.

2 .....  
?

Only 9 drinks a day.

3 .....  
?

In 1916.

4 .....  
?

64 bottling plants.

5 .....  
?

Coca-Cola Classic.

**Assignment.**

**1 Think of an activity/exercise that will practice grammar.**

**2 Think of one activity for follow-up speaking.**

## ACTIVITY 2 *Getting into working with text*

**In this activity, we will go on with looking at different types of tasks for working with text and the possibilities of how to integrate other language skills.**

**Task 1. Read the text. What aim do you think we have? What skills do you think are or can be involved?**

*Specific aim: ? Skills involved: ?*

### **England**

England is the biggest of the four countries in the United Kingdom. Together with Scotland and Wales, these three countries are the island of Great Britain. The English Channel is in the south between England and France. People travel to France by ferry across the English Channel or by train through the Channel Tunnel which goes under the sea.

Over 50 million people live in England and that's around 80 per cent of the total UK population. It is a multicultural country where more than 250 languages are spoken in the capital city, London. The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy, which means that there is a queen or king but they don't make the laws of the country. Laws and political decisions in England are made by the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The Houses of Parliament are in central London next to the River Thames and the most famous part is the clock tower, Big Ben.

Other large cities in England are Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Bristol. Outside cities, England is a very green country and has many rural areas of natural beauty such as the Lake District, an area with lots of lakes in the north, and the New Forest, a big area of forest in the south of the country.

*Language.* The official language of England is English, which is spoken today by millions of people all over the world. Many students go to England from other countries to study the language and learn about the culture. Although everyone speaks English, there are many different accents around the country. French was the official language in England between 1066 and 1362, which is why there are many French words and expressions in English such as 'bon voyage' for 'have a good trip' or 'bouquet' for 'a bunch of flowers'.

*Music.* English people love music. In the summer you can go to music festivals all over the country like those at Glastonbury, Leeds or Reading. Glastonbury is a five-day festival of

music, dance, comedy, theatre and circus and around 175,000 people go. Many people stay at the festivals for a few days and camp in tents. People listen to all types of music, especially pop and rock. England has produced many international groups and singers like the Beatles, Amy Winehouse, Coldplay, Ed Sheeran and Adele.

*Sport.* The most popular sports in England are football, rugby and cricket and most towns have a sports ground where teams can play. English football teams like Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool are world-famous and English football players include David Beckham, Wayne Rooney and Harry Kane. Women's football is also popular and teams play in leagues and competitions all over the country. Every year, the English rugby union team plays in the Six Nations Championship against Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France and Italy. Cricket is a traditional sport played with a bat and ball which began in England and is now played all over the world. People like to watch all these sports on television, as well as other sports like horse racing, tennis, snooker (a type of billiards) and motor racing.

*Food.* England is a very multicultural country and this has a big influence on the food people eat. Indian, Chinese and Italian cuisines are popular alternatives to traditional English food like fish and chips, roast beef or sausage and mash (mashed potatoes). Many English people drink several cups of tea every day, usually with milk. However, coffee and herbal teas are also popular.

*Symbols.* The national flag of England is white with a red cross. It is called the St George's Cross and Saint George is the patron saint of England. St George's Day is on 23 April, but it's not a public holiday. The rose is the national flower of England and the lion is the national animal. The lion is a symbol of many English sports teams.

**Task 2. Match the words. What aim do you think we have? What skills do you think are or can be involved?**

*Specific aim: ? Skills involved: ?*

English Channel	rugby competition
Big Ben	traditional food
Bristol	rural area
the New Forest	music festival
Glastonbury	sea

Ed Sheeran	city
Harry Kane	singer
six Nations	sport
snooker	footballer
sausage and mash	clock

**Task 3. Choose the correct option. What aim do you think we have? What skills do you think are or can be involved?**

*Specific aim: ? Skills involved: ?*

- 1 Great Britain is England, ... a) Scotland and Northern Ireland; b) Scotland and Wales; c) Wales and Northern Ireland.
- 2 The sea to the south of England is the ...a) Irish Sea; b) Celtic Sea; c) English Channel.
- 3 There are ... a) 50 million b) 80 million c) 250 million people living in England.
- 4 Political decisions in England are made by ...a) the queen or king; b) the Parliament of the United Kingdom; c) the Government of England.
- 5 The Lake District is ...a) near London; b) in the south of England; c) in the north of England.
- 6 There are lots of words and expressions in English that are ...a) French; b) Welsh; c) Chinese.
- 7 Reading is the name of ...a) a music festival; b) an English music group; c) a type of music.
- 8 Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool ...a) are all from London; b) play against the national teams of Wales, Scotland and Ireland every year; c) are known all over the world.
- 9 In the Six Nations Championship, England doesn't play against ...a) France; b) Spain, c) Italy.
- 10 People in England ...a) prefer traditional food; b) enjoy the variety of different cuisines; c) don't drink much tea.

**Task 4. Fill in prepositions (all over, through, in, across, in, between, about, to, between, next to), there are more prepositions than needed. What aim do you think we have? What skills do you think are or can be involved?**

*Specific aim: ? Skills involved: ?*

The English Channel is in the south .... England and France.

2. People travel to France by ferry ..... the English Channel or by train ...the Channel Tunnel.

3. The Houses of Parliament are in central London ..... the River Thames.

4. Many students go to England from other countries .... study the language and learn ..... the culture.

5. French was the official language .... England .... 1066 and 1362.

6. Women's football teams play .... leagues and competitions .... the country.

### **Assignment.**

**1 Try to prepare a true/false exercise from the text about England (five sentences).**

**2 Think of one follow-up activity for writing.**

### **ACTIVITY 3 Reading techniques**

**In this activity we deal with sample texts used for practising reading techniques. Remember that for training the reading techniques it is useful to let the students know the instructions, i.e. the purpose of reading, before reading itself.**

#### **Sample text 1**

*Specific aim:* reading for gist

*Skills involved:* identify the content by fast overlooking the text

**Task 1. Reading for gist. Read the two texts, add an appropriate heading and answer the questions below.**

#### **Text 1**

Heading: \_\_\_\_\_

Today, many people prefer to travel independently. Firstly, they decide where they want to go and then think about the details, such as how long they want to stay, where they want to stay, how they will get there, how much it will cost, when they will go and what they need to take.

**Answer the following questions**

- 1 How do people like to travel these days? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 What do they decide on first? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 How many other details are mentioned in the text? \_\_\_\_\_

**Text 2**

Heading: \_\_\_\_\_

The time you go depends on what you want to do. For example, if you want to do outdoor activities such as walking, cycling or canoeing then you need to choose a time when the weather is dry. If you prefer a more relaxed holiday spent sunbathing and swimming then the weather should not be too hot.

**Answer the following questions.**

- 1 What does the time you go depend on? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 What are some examples of outdoor activities? \_\_\_\_\_

**Sample text 2**

*Specific aims:* for Task 1 be able to acquire specific data from the text by fast reading; for task 2 be able to read the text fast to acquire specific information by respecting the text structure; for Task 3 to encourage the students to think what the text is about

*Skills involved:* Task 1 – reference data, scanning, Task 2 – skimming, Task 3 – anticipation, surveying

**Task 2. Read the questions for scanning and then go quickly through the text (app. 1 min) and answer them.**

- a) What is the address of the Empire State Building?
- b) How is the building high?
- c) What is the number of steps to the 80<sup>th</sup> floor?
- d) How many windows are there?
- e) How many tons of steel was used?



## **The Empire State Building**

At its opening on May 1, 1931, the Empire State Building was hailed as the tallest skyscraper in existence and the eighth wonder of the world. It immediately became a major tourist attraction. At Fifth Avenue and 34th Street, its 102 stories tower 1,250 feet (381 m) above New York City; the television mast added in 1951 brings its total height to 1,472 feet (448.7 m). On the clearest days, visitors to the building's upper observation deck can see for some 30 miles (48.3 km) in all directions. The Empire State Building lost its title of the tallest with the completion of Chicago's Sears Tower in 1974.

Built as an office tower on the site of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, the Empire State Building was originally intended – by its architects Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon – to serve also as a mooring mast for dirigibles. Though such a use would certainly have been spectacular, it had to be abandoned as impractical.

The official opening was a gala event, attended by Herbert Hoover, then president of the United States, and by Alfred E. Smith, the former governor of New York State, whose real estate company owned and operated the structure. The building's vital statistics, as given at that time, included a total weight of 365,000 tons, of which 65,000 tons are steel. Some 10 million bricks enclose the frame. Despite the building's enormous height, its foundation extends only 55 feet (17 m) below street level, where it is firmly anchored to the underlying bedrock. This solid base accounts for the surprising fact that, even in winds up to 186 miles (300 km) per hour, the structure sways no more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch (2 cm).

Other statistics are equally impressive: there are some 7 miles (11 km) of elevator shafts, and one elevator can reach the 80th floor in 80 seconds. Those visitors who are tough enough to walk to the top have to climb 1,860 steps. There are 6,400 windows in the building.

A disastrous event involving the Empire State Building occurred on July 28, 1945, when a U.S. B-25 bomber crashed into the 78th and 79th floors, killing 13 people and causing extensive damage in the area immediately surrounding the accident. The building itself, however, remained as sound as ever – a testimony to the quality of its construction.

*Lee Dickens (adopted from Friendship)*

**Task 3. Read the questions for skimming, then skim the text quickly (app. 1 min) and answer the questions?**

- a) When was the Empire State Building opened?
- b) Who was the gala opening attended by?

- c) Did anything disastrous happen to the Empire State Building?
- d) Who was the US president at the time of the opening?

**Task 4. Read the questions for surveying and then look at the text again to answer them.**

- a) What is the title of the article?
- b) Who is the author of the article?
- c) Where is this article from?

*As it is sometimes difficult to choose a suitable text for practising the reading techniques, the further sample texts can be helpful and provide you with the possibilities how to train scanning and skimming.*

#### **Assignment.**

**1 For each sample an exercise either for scanning or skimming is added. Try to complement each exercise with one more option/question.**

**2 Try to think of 2-3 questions for skimming or scanning for the following sample texts due to the fact which one is missing.**

#### **Sample text 1.**

**Task for skimming. Look at the questions, then skim the text and answer the following questions.**

**1 What is the aim of this text?**

- A. To discourage people from visiting Singapore
- B. To prove that electric cars are less eco-friendly than fossil-fuel-powered machines
- C. To show that we need to count the emissions of power stations to see how green an electric car is.

**2 When the owner of the electric car went to Singapore, he received**

- A. a rebate of around US\$10,800
- B. a fine of around US\$10,800

C. a fine of around US\$15,000

**3** To prove that electric car was a gross polluter, the authorities in Singapore calculated the ..... of generating the electricity to charge the car.

### **Are electric cars really eco-friendly?**

Electric-car drivers are saving the planet, right? Their vehicles produce none of the pollutants that dinosaur-burning, fossil-fuel-powered machines do. That is the standard view, and governments around the world provide incentives to encourage the uptake of this new technology.

That is why a Tesla owner got a rude shock when he went to import his vehicle into Singapore - the first person to do so. The Tesla Model S is a 100% electric vehicle. It does not have an exhaust to emit from. So what happened?

Instead of an expected rebate of around US\$15,000 (US\$ 10,800) he received a fine of the same amount for being a gross polluter. The company commented on the incident, "The Model S that our customer imported into Singapore left our factory only two years ago with energy consumption rated at 181 Wh/km. This qualifies as the cleanest possible category of car in Singapore and entitles the owner to an incentive rather than a fine."

The Singapore authorities calculated the 'carbon cost' of generating the electricity that will be used to charge the car. This is the elephant in the trunk of electric vehicles. Where and how the power is produced is not often considered, but perhaps it should be. Let's move the elephant up to the passenger seat and address it directly.

The authorities in Singapore apparently found the Tesla in question consumes 444 watt-hours of electricity per km (Wh/km) in tests. Without wanting to get too maths-heavy, the number of 444Wh/km does seem high. And as we still need power stations to produce such an amount of electric energy, the environmental impact is not so small as it seemed to be.

But what about the bigger picture - should we be factoring in the emissions of power stations when working out how green an electric car is? The logical answer is yes. Emissions shifted elsewhere are still emissions, and CO<sub>2</sub> impacts the global atmosphere wherever it is released.

### **Sample text 2.**

**Task for scanning. Look at the questions first, then scan the text and answer the following questions:**

Q1: Which age group will like the book? .....

Q2: Who is Teresa Wilson? .....

Q3: What does "mediocre" mean in the last line?  
.....

I really don't know why this book is so popular. I mean, I suppose it is going to appeal to young girls who want danger and romance, but I found this book really tedious. For a start, the characters were really unconvincing. The author went out of her way to add lots of details about the characters, but I found these details really pointless. I thought that some of the facts she presented about the main characters would become significant in some way later in the novel, but they didn't. They were just worthless bits of information. I also was disappointed that, although this book is meant to be about kids at high school, the writer seems to have no recollection at all about what it's like to be 17. The main character thought and acted like a 32-year old. It just wasn't believable. I'm not saying Teresa Wilson is a bad writer. She can obviously string words together and come up with a story that is appealing to a large number of people, but she lacks anything original. There is no flair. It just uses the same sort of language as you can see in many other mediocre novels.

### Sample text 3.

**Task for scanning. Look at the questions first, then scan the text and answer the questions below.**

**Which of the possibilities is correct?**

**A. How many species of salmon have become extinct in BC?**

27                                      31                                      137                                      142

**B. How much of the world's newsprint paper is supplied by Canada?**

31%                                      49%                                      34%                                      19%

**C. What equipment on a ship was made from hemp?**

ropes                                      waterproof cloth                                      engine fuel                                      life rafts

## **Pulp Friction**

Every second, one hectare of the world's rainforest is destroyed. That's equivalent to two football fields. An area the size of New York City is lost every day. In a year, that adds up to 31 million hectares -- more than the land area of Poland. This alarming rate of destruction has serious consequences for the environment; scientists estimate, for example, that 137 species of plant, insect or animal become extinct every day due to logging. In British Columbia, where, since 1990, thirteen rainforest valleys have been clear-cut, 142 species of salmon have already become extinct, and the habitats of grizzly bears, wolves and many other creatures are threatened. Logging, however, provides jobs, profits, taxes for the government and cheap products of all kinds for consumers, so the government is reluctant to restrict or control it.

Much of Canada's forestry production goes towards making pulp and paper. According to the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association, Canada supplies 34% of the world's wood pulp and 49% of its newsprint paper. If these paper products could be produced in some other way, Canadian forests could be preserved. Recently, a possible alternative way of producing paper has been suggested by agriculturalists and environmentalists: a plant called hemp.

Hemp has been cultivated by many cultures for thousands of years. It produces fibre which can be made into paper, fuel, oils, textiles, food, and rope. For centuries, it was essential to the economies of many countries because it was used to make the ropes and cables used on sailing ships; colonial expansion and the establishment of a world-wide trading network would not have been feasible without hemp. Nowadays, ships' cables are usually made from wire or synthetic fibres, but scientists are now suggesting that the cultivation of hemp should be revived for the production of paper and pulp. According to its proponents, four times as much paper can be produced from land using hemp rather than trees, and many environmentalists believe that the large-scale cultivation of hemp could reduce the pressure on Canada's forests.

However, there is a problem: hemp is illegal in many countries of the world. This plant, so useful for fibre, rope, oil, fuel and textiles, is a species of cannabis, related to the plant from which marijuana is produced. In the late 1930s, a movement to ban the drug marijuana began to gather force, resulting in the eventual banning of the cultivation not only of the plant used to produce the drug, but also of the commercial fibre-producing hemp plant. Although both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson grew hemp in large quantities on their own land, any American growing the plant today would soon find himself in prison -- despite the fact that marijuana cannot be produced from the hemp plant, since it contains almost no THC (the active ingredient in the drug).

#### **Sample text 4.**

**Task for skimming. Look at the questions first, then skim the text and answer the following questions:**

##### **1 What is the purpose of this report?**

- a) To describe the history of alien life.
- b) To describe government cover-ups.
- c) To describe the history of UFO sightings.
- d) To describe UFOs in popular movies.

##### **2 Why are UFO sightings so controversial?**

- a) They have never been proved.
- b) There are many sightings.
- c) The government covers up sightings.
- d) There are very few UFO sightings.

#### **The history of UFOs**

Unidentified Flying Object (or “UFO”) is a term commonly used to describe lights or shapes in the sky. It was first coined by the United States Air Force in 1952 to describe sightings of mysterious objects in the sky that could not be explained even after careful investigation. Nowadays UFOs are spotted frequently, and feature in numerous movies and TV shows. Another popular name for such an object is, “Flying Saucer,” in reference to the round shape of many UFOs.

The first widely publicized UFO sighting was in 1947, by a pilot called Kenneth Arnold. Following this event, public sightings of UFOs increased dramatically. Movies and TV shows began featuring visitors from outer space, arriving on earth in flying saucers. With the popularity of these images, many people claimed to have seen lights in the sky. Some experts believe that people simply think they see UFOs because of the influence of TV and movies.

However, experts estimate that as little as 5% of these sightings could be called “unidentified.” Usually, these lights are made by aircraft, satellites, or weather balloons. Top secret air force activities during the Cold War may have been responsible for many of the UFO sightings in America and Europe. Although not actually aliens, the secretive nature of these flying objects is definitely unidentified.

Another popular idea concerning UFOs concerns the role of world governments. Specifically, people believe that the US government has discovered alien life and operates a “cover-up” to hide the truth from the public. The most widely believed cover-up is that of the Roswell Incident. In July, 1947, a UFO supposedly landed in Roswell, New Mexico, and was examined

and hidden by government agents. There have been many investigations into the Roswell Incident, however, these reports always claim that no such event occurred.

#### **ACTIVITY 4 Reading strategies**

**In this activity will we deal with sample texts to practise reading strategies.**

*Specific aim:* identifying similarities and differences of two stories

*Skills involved:* use of Compare strategy

**Task 1. Read the text of the following two short stories, use the strategy Compare and Contrast.**

#### **Story 1 The Story of Persephone**

Persephone was the daughter of Zeus, ruler of the gods, and Demeter, the goddess of the harvest. Demeter was very protective of her daughter, and turned down many suitors who asked for Persephone's hand in marriage. One of these suitors was Hades, the god of the Underworld. Demeter was repulsed by the notion of her only daughter living with Hades in darkness, among the Dead. However, Hades did not take Demeter's rejection lightly, and instead crafted a plan to kidnap Persephone.

While she was out picking flowers in the valley, the Earth opened and Hades emerged on a chariot pulled by 6 black horses. He took Persephone and descended back into the Underworld. No one but Zeus and Helios, god of the sun, knew that Persephone was kidnapped, but they decided to keep quiet in order to avoid an argument with stubborn Hades and tempestuous Demeter. When Demeter discovered that her beloved daughter had gone missing, she fell into a deep depression. She wandered the Earth looking for Persephone until Helios, feeling sorry for her, told Demeter the truth about her daughter's whereabouts. Demeter was furious with Hades, and angry with Zeus for lying to her. She became so upset that she took leave from her duties as goddess of the harvest, which plunged the earth into winter. Everyone was cold and hungry.

In order to restore order, Zeus called forth Persephone to determine if she was being kept in the Underworld against her will. Just before she left, Hades gave Persephone the seeds of the pomegranate fruit, whose magical properties made people miss their life in the Underworld. When Persephone arrived back at Mount Olympus, she went before Zeus and Demeter. Zeus asked his daughter where she wanted to live.

“In the Underworld, with Hades,” she replied.

“It’s a trick!” Demeter cried. “Hades has brainwashed her! If I can’t have Persephone with me, I will make sure that the crops never grow again!”

Zeus raised his hand for silence. “It is decided: to please both sides, Persephone will spend 6 months of the year with her mother and 6 months in the Underworld with Hades,” Zeus said.

From then on, Persephone visited her mother every spring and summer. During this time the Earth was fertile and fruitful. The rest of the year, when Persephone was with Hades, Demeter’s depression caused the earth to fall into winter again.

## **Story 2 How I became the Queen of the Underworld**

I never wanted to displease Mother. I just wanted the freedom to explore some new worlds and meet new people. When Mother told me that I couldn’t go to pick that year’s crop of narcissus flowers in the valley by myself, that was the last straw. Mother had always been generous in her service to Mankind, giving them the gift of the harvest, but she often failed to recognize the wishes of her only daughter. All I wanted was to find my own way to be useful to Mankind, but I was cramped up in stuffy Mount Olympus.

I decided to take matters into my own hands, so I went out alone to the Valley of the Narcissus. There I met Hades, god of the Underworld. He told me all about the important job he held caring for the eternal souls of the Dead. “I need a likeable queen to help me convene with the Dead, someone who can listen carefully to them and inspire them to make the Underworld their new home,” Hades said. “Otherwise, they will want to go back to Earth and haunt Mankind, and Zeus will be very displeased.”

Hades looked at me intently. The thought of holding a very important position that would impact Mankind thrilled me! However, I knew it would anger Mother.

“How about you try it for a little while, and if you don’t like it we will find a way to bring you back to Mount Olympus,” he said.

“If Mother doesn’t find a way first,” I said.

We smiled at each other and made our way down to the Underworld. For the next 6 months, I heard the Dead’s complaints about the Underworld. I took notes and together with Hades we made a 10-point plan for making the Underworld a better place to spend eternity. The amount of hauntings on Earth dropped by 78%. I was loving my new job, but I also missed Mother. One day, we received word that Zeus commanded our return to Mount Olympus for a court



hearing. Hades was being accused of kidnapping me! While I hoped to dispel this terrible myth, I also worried if we left I would never be able to return.

“The pomegranate is the official fruit of the Underworld.” Hades said. “If you eat it, you must return for at least half of the year. All the gods and goddesses know that.”

“You mean Mother will be forced to recognize my role here with you and allow me to come back?” I asked.

“Yes,” said Hades. With that, I gobbled up a handful of the delicious pomegranate seeds and we made our way back to Mount Olympus.

There I explained to Mother and Zeus that Hades had not kidnapped me, and explained my important work to them. To further illustrate how I felt, I told them about eating the pomegranate seeds. Mother was distraught, swearing that she would take the harvest away from mankind forever.

“Mother, aren’t you even a little proud of me?” I asked. Her eyes welled up with tears. “Of course I am. It’s just .... I miss you.”

Then Zeus raised his hand to speak: “It is decreed: Persephone will spend 6 months of the year ruling the Underworld with Hades’ side and another 6 months helping Demeter with the harvest season.”

Mother and I embraced and let out a sigh of relief. Finally, I had found my own way to give to Mankind, and also be with my family. And that’s how I became Queen of the Underworld.

**Task 2. Fill in the table with the features the two stories differ in and features they have in common.**

Story 1 specifics	What the stories have in common	Story 2 specifics

**2. Answer the following question? Can you add three more multiple choice questions from these two short stories?**

1. Is Hades God of:
  - a) God of War
  - b) God of the sky
  - c) God of the Underworld

### Assignment.

**1 Try to think of a follow-up activity for speaking.**

**2 Try to think of a follow-up activity for writing.**

### ACTIVITY 5 *Integrating other language skills*

**In this activity we will look how to exploit a text comprising a conversation and look at the possibilities how integrate other language skills**

*Specific aim:* be able to exploit different types of texts

*Skills involved:* understanding the information and relate them to own knowledge

#### Task 1. Read the text.

##### **Human body**

**A:** Hey, I'm reading this really interesting article about the human body.

**B:** Yeah? Well, we know all about that from biology lessons.

**A:** No, we didn't learn much at all at school! They're discovering loads more things all the time. Really amazing things! Did you know that only about one tenth of the cells in your body are really you? The rest are bacteria.

**B:** What? I'm not really me?

**A:** No, of course, you are you, but you also have millions, or trillions, of bacteria in you.

**B:** Eeeuuugh!

**A:** No, they're mostly really helpful. Someone did an experiment to see if animals can live without bacteria, and he found that a lot of them died or had to have a special diet. Animals need bacteria to digest food, you see. So we're better off with bacteria.

**B:** Unless the bacteria are bad.

**A:** Unless they are bad, but they're nearly all good. Oh yeah, and going back to cells, do you know how many cells you have in your body?

**B:** Quite a lot, I'd say. A good few.

**A:** Yeah, but how many?

**B:** I don't know. I'm not mathematical.

**A:** 7 octillion! That's 7 plus 27 noughts.

**B:** I knew it was a lot.

**A:** OK, that's an amazingly huge number, almost impossible to imagine. But the really weird thing is that most of the atoms are empty space, just air or nothingness. And if you took out the empty space, you could fit your body inside a tiny cube which measures one 500th of a centimetre on either side. That's a box measuring 0.002 of a centimetre on each side. You'd be much too small to see.

**B:** Mmm, I can imagine that. It sounds like something that would happen in a really bad Hollywood movie. You know, a mad scientist goes: 'I'm going to extract all the air from your body'. OK, enough facts for one day.

**A:** Don't go! One last thing, did you know ...

**B:** No.

**A:** Did you know that you probably have mites in your eyelashes?

**B:** Mites in my eyelashes? What are mites exactly anyway?

**A:** Yeah, they're very small creatures, like insects, only not insects. They're about a third of a millimetre long, so you can't really see them. These particular mites live in eyelashes and eyebrows.

**B:** But in mine?

**A:** Well, maybe not. Only about 50% of people have them, and more older people. So you might not have any. Anyway, they're completely harmless, they just eat dead skin.

**B:** Yeah, right, harmless. I really would have preferred not to know that.

**A:** Sorry.

**B:** I mean, really!

**Task 2. Choose the correct answer to the following three comprehension questions and add three more.**

1 How many bacteria are in the human body?

- a) millions    b) thousands    c) octillion    d) none

2 Why do animals need bacteria for life?

- a) to move    b) to digest food    c) to sleep    d) don't need them

**Task 3. Fill the gaps and complete the exercise with three more gap filling sentences.**

1 In the human body are ..... or .....of bacteria.

2 Bacteria are beneficial for both animals and humans, because they help them ..... food.

**Assignment.**

**1 Try to prepare a quiz or questions about the human body.**

**2 What pre-reading activity will you do with the text about the human body?**

**3 What while-reading activity will you recommend for this text?**

**4 How would you utilize reading aloud with this text?**

**ACTIVITY 6 Integrating other language skills.**

**In this activity we will deal with the possibilities how to integrate other language skills.**

**Task 1. Read the text. Make notes on points you think that are different in Britain and USA.**

*Specific aim:* understanding the text and looking for differences

*Skills involved:* making notes, identifying the differences

**Eating out - What a British Person Should Know When Eating Out in America**

Eating out may be a simple thing, but for British people who have just come to America, it could be an experience full of surprises. Here are five main differences a Brit should pay attention to when eating out in a restaurant in America.

*Ordering Drinks.* The first thing a waiter would ask when you sit down in an American restaurant is whether you would like bottled or tap water. If you choose bottled, you will then be asked whether you would prefer still or sparkling. Soon, the water you ordered will be brought to you. Coffee and soft drinks will also be gladly refilled. The waiter will proactively ask if you want another coffee or coke. In Britain, water and soft drinks must be requested and they are not free.

*The Service.* Waiters in American restaurants are more pleasant and attentive. They are always chatty and often come to your table during the meal to refill drinks and check everything is



4 How do customers pick up the bill in British restaurants?

- |                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| A) Wait until a waiter comes. | C) Raise a hand and wave. |
| B) Put money on the table.    | D) Go to the cashier.     |

5 How much should you tip a waiter in America?

- |                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| A) Less than \$10. | C) Between \$15 and \$20. |
| B) About 10%.      | D) Between 15 and 20%.    |

### Assignment

**1 Integrate speaking. Download the menu of a selected restaurant, prepare short instructions, and have the students have a role play *At a restaurant*.**

**2 Think of a suitable follow-up activity for writing.**

**3 Prepare an activity for developing students' vocabulary on eating.**

### ACTIVITY 7 *Improving vocabulary*

**In this activity we deal with the possible tasks for improving the vocabulary or knowledge of identifying synonyms or antonyms, how can the meaning of the word be understood from the context or by having knowledge of frequent suffixes and prefixes.**

#### Task 1. Read the text.

Programming people means getting others to act consistently as you want them to act. Stern patterns or employers often are pretty good at this, at least while the subjects are under observation. Hypnotists can obtain excellent results in achieving desired behaviour from suggestible subjects for short periods.

What interests us here are precise techniques for altering long-term behaviour patterns in predictable ways. These new patterns may be desirable by the subject or by the programmer or by the organization employing him.

For achieving certain kinds of long-term programmed behaviour the programmer need not to be a scientifically trained technologist. Consider how the intense and unattractive Charles Manson horrified and fascinated millions of people by his control methods. He had an ability to induce sustained zombie-like behaviour in his followers, mostly girls. They committed

random murders in the Los Angeles area. When a number of his 'slaves' faced trial they vigorously asserted that the murders were their own idea. They wanted to protect Charlie, who was always somewhere else when the butcheries occurred.

In order to prove his theory that Manson had master-minded the killings, the prosecutor, Vincent Bugliosi, had to spend months uncovering and analysing the sources of Manson's control over the presumably free and footloose young people. His most important findings were these:

- Manson was gifted at perceiving the psychological needs of others. He assured runaway girls needing a father that he would be their father. He assured plain-looking girls that they were beautiful.
- He was careful to destroy pre-existing identities. All the members of his clan had to take on new names.
- He systematically destroyed inhibitions as part of his obedience training.
- He offered these insecure youngsters a bizarre religion, in which he was the Infinite Being who would lead them to a world of milk and honey.
- He was careful to identify and probe what each recruit was most afraid of, and play on it.
- Finally, Manson apparently had some hypnotic powers.

Bugliosi succeeded in convincing the jury that Manson was, indeed, responsible for the murders. (From F. Grellet *Developing reading skills*, 2004).

## Task 2. Looking for equivalents.

*Specific aim:* to train recognizing synonyms and antonyms

*Skills involved:* deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items

**a) In paragraphs 2 and 3, find the synonyms of the following words:**

changing

take place

declare

**b) In paragraph 3**

find an adjective which means the opposite of 'for short periods' .....

find a noun that means the opposite of 'free and footloose young people' .....

**c) In paragraph 4 find the words which mean the opposite of:**

hiding .....

fail .....

### Task 3. Recognizing word formation.

*Specific aim:* to train recognizing word-formation

*Skills involved:* deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items through understanding word formation

**a) Two words with suffix *-ible* appear in the text. What are they? What effect does the suffix have on the meaning of the word? Can you think of other words formed in the same way?**

**b) Underline the suffixes in the following words and try to explain the meaning of the suffixes. Can you think of other words formed in the same way?**

hypnotist, predictable, beautiful, apparently, observation

**c) Find two words with a prefix in the text. One of them is used to make the word negative. What prefix would you add to each of these adjectives and nouns to make them negative?**

predictable, trained, organization, ability

### ACTIVITY 8 Cohesion and coherence

**In this activity we will deal with cohesion and coherence and reference words within the text which make it cohesed and coherent.**

**Task 1. Read the text. In this text, the use of reference has been made. Can you identify them?**

*Specific aim:* to train recognizing reference

*Skills involved:* understanding relations between parts of text through reference

The idea of evolution (which is gradual change) was not a new one. The Greeks had thought of it, so had Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles, and also the Frenchman, Lamarck. It is one thing to have an idea; we can all of us guess and sometimes make a lucky guess.

It is quite another thing to produce proof of the correctness of that idea. Darwin thought he had proof in his notebooks. He saw that all animals had the struggle to survive. Those which were best at surviving their environment passed on the good qualities which had helped them to their descendants. This was called 'the survival of the fittest'. For example, in a cold climate, those



who have the warmest fur will live. Darwin believed that this necessity for an animal to deal with its environment explained the immense variety of creatures.

**Task 2. In the following text, some paragraphs or sentences are missing. Read the whole passage and supply the missing sentences aso as to get a coherent text.**

*Specific aim:* to train recognizing coherence

*Skills involved:* understanding relations between parts of text through coherence

**A planned transport system?**

In the past we have muddled through somehow over transport. Enormously bulky and heavy goods, which would be more suitable for rail, fill up the roads. On the other hand, .....

Once quiet villages and country towns are filled with petrol fumes, and their inhabitants can hardly cross the road to get to a shop on the other side. In the cities .....

We have reached the point at which we must plan our transport. We must .....; we must plan and build roads to take an increasing volume of traffic, and arrange it so that our cities are not choked with cars and our villages ..... . Our answer would be to make traffic tunnels underground leading to central car-parks, but this would be terribly expensive. ....

**Task 3. Read the following text and select the most appropriate transition words from the given below.**

*Specific aim:* to train understanding the value of linking, transition words

*Skills involved:* understanding relations between parts of text through the use of logical connectors

A colour consultant from Toronto explained to the Inter-Society Colour Council meeting in New York an ingenious scheme which a client company had conceived for increasing the sale of potato peelers. He began by pointing out a puzzling fact, 1..... peelers never wear out’, enough are sold in two years in his country to put one in every home. What

happens to them? He gave his answer. 'Investigation reveals that they get thrown away with potato peelings.'

One of his colleagues, he added, had then come up with a dazzling plan for helping along this throw-away process. He proposed that their company paint their peelers as much like a potato peeling as possible.

2..... a potato-coloured peeler wouldn't have much eye-appeal on the sales counter. They decided to solve that by displaying the peeler on a colourful card. Once the housewife got the peeler home and removed the bright card, the chances that she would lose the peeler were excellent.

In some cases the consumers have no choice but to be waste makers 3..... the way products are sold to them. Many paste pots come with brushes built into the cover, and the brushes fail by half-inch to reach the bottom. 4....., millions of 'empty' paste jars are thrown away with a spoonful of paste still on them. 5....., millions of 'used' tubes of lipstick are thrown away with a half-inch of lipstick remaining in the tube.

**Here are the link words:**

- |                  |                    |                |                   |
|------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1 a) because     | b) although        | c) for example | d) since          |
| 2 a) in addition | b) on the contrary | c) in this way | d) however        |
| 3 a) in spite of | b) because of      | c) as          | d) in addition to |
| 4 a) similarly   | b) for example     | c) however     | d) thus           |
| 5 a) likewise    | b) on the contrary | c) yet         | d) for instance   |

**ACTIVITY 9 Paragraph**

**In this activity we will deal with sample texts for practising the structure of a paragraph, and for identifying the topic sentences, the relations of the other sentences to them and supporting details and distinguishing the main idea from supporting details.**

**Task 1. Read the text and then think of its possible title.**

*Specific aim:* to train the students to recognize the topic sentences and relations of the other

sentences to them

*Skill involved:* distinguishing the main idea from supporting details

I don't know why UFOs are never sighted over large cities by hordes of people. But it is consistent with the idea that there are no space vehicles from elsewhere in our skies. I suppose it is also consistent with the idea that there are no space vehicles from elsewhere to avoid large cities. However, the primary argument against recent extra-terrestrial visitation is the absence of evidence.

Take leprechauns. Suppose there are frequent reports of leprechauns. Because I myself am emotionally predisposed in favour of leprechauns, I would want to check the evidence especially carefully. Suppose I find that 500 picnickers independently saw a green blur in the forest. Terrific. But so what? This is evidence only for a green blur. Maybe it was a fast hummingbird. Such cases are reliable but not particularly interesting.

Now suppose that someone reports: "I was walking through the forest and came upon a convention of 7,000 leprechauns. We talked for a while and I was taken down into their hole in the ground and shown pots of gold and feathered green hats." I will reply: "Fabulous! Who else went along?" And he will say, "Nobody, or "My fishing partner." This is a case that is interesting but unreliable. In a case of such importance, the uncorroborated testimony of one or two people is almost worthless. What I want is for the 500 picnickers to come upon the 7,000 leprechauns ... or vice versa.

The situation is the same with UFOs. The reliable cases are uninteresting and the interesting cases unreliable. Unfortunately, there are no cases that are both reliable and interesting. (From F. Grellet, *Developing reading skills*, 2004)

*Note: Leprechaun – in Irish folklore is a fairy (similar to dwarfs we know from other fairy tales) in a form of a tiny old man often with a cocked hat and leather apron, who is said to live in remote places and make shoes. The sound of hammering betrays his presence. He possesses a hidden crock of gold and if captured he might reveal its hiding place.*

**Task 2. Try to pick up one sentence in each paragraph that can sum up the main idea (topic sentence).**

*Specific aim:* to train the students to recognize the topic sentences and relations of the other sentences to them

*Skills involved:* distinguishing the main idea from supporting details

**Task 3. Which words of the first paragraph do the second and third paragraph develop?**

*Specific aim:* to train the students to recognize the topic sentences and relations of the other sentences to them

*Skills involved:* distinguishing the main idea from supporting details

2 .....

3 .....

**Task 4. What words are used to introduce the examples/illustrations given in the text?**

*Specific aim:* to train the students to recognize the details in supporting the topic sentence

*Skills involved:* distinguishing supporting details

**Task 5. The following points are all mentioned in the text. Which of them in your opinion represent the main idea (M) and which of them represent a supporting detail (S)?**

*Specific aim:* to train the students to recognize the details in supporting the topic sentence

*Skills involved:* distinguishing supporting details

- Space vehicles from elsewhere avoid large cities
- The primary argument against recent extra-terrestrial visitation is the absence of evidence.
- The author is emotionally predisposed in favour of leprechauns.
- In fact that 500 picnickers saw a green light in the forest is terrific.
- The green blur might have been a hummingbird.
- Cases such as that of the picnickers are not interesting.
- Someone said the leprechauns took him down their hole.
- The man said that his fishing partner was with him.
- The reliable cases are uninteresting and the interesting cases are unreliable.

**Assignment**

**Try to find a suitable text for students to train the recognizing of topic sentences and prepare a similar exercise as in Task 5.**

## ACTIVITY 10 *Other possibilities for working with text*

**In this final activity, we will deal with some other possible activities for working with text such as classification or (re)organization.**

### **Classification, (re)organization**

Some texts can comprise a lot of words that we want to divide into separate groups, i. e. classify them. Classification is a systematic arrangement of things, people, places (or different parts of speech in linguistics) in groups or categories according to established criteria.

There are four types of classification, they are geographical classification, chronological classification, qualitative classification, and quantitative classification, and some other sources distinguish between natural and artificial classification. Nevertheless, for our purposes of reading comprehension development, it is enough to teach the students to understand the similarities of particular items so that they can be put in one group or category. Classification within an academic reading, however, is subject to precise criteria.

The following sample texts focus on practising grammar, and classification can be used here efficiently. For practising grammar (especially with younger students) it is recommended to select an enjoyable text – for many students grammar is an issue, therefore, choose the text that is not very difficult and keep thus the work balanced.

### **Sample text for classification**

*Specific aim:* identify specific parts of speech

*Skills involved:* classifying, putting into groups on given criteria

### **Task 1. Read the text.**

#### **The Princess and the bowling ball**

Once upon a time, there was a Prince. And this Prince's dad and mom (the King and Queen) somehow got it into their royal heads that no Princess would be good enough for their boy unless she could feel a pea through one hundred mattresses.

So it should come as no surprise that the Prince had a very hard time finding a Princess. Every time he met a nice girl, his mom and dad would pile one hundred mattresses on top of a pea and then invite her to sleep over.

When the Princess came down for breakfast, the Queen would ask, “How did you sleep, dear?” The Princess would politely say, “Fine, thank you.” And the King would show her the door.

Now, this went on for three years. And of course, nobody ever felt the pea under one hundred mattresses. Then one day the Prince met the girl of his dreams. He decided he better do something about it. That night, before the Princess went to bed, the Prince slipped his bowling ball under the one hundred mattresses. When the Princess came down for breakfast the next morning, the Queen asked, “How did you sleep, dear?”

“This might sound odd,” said the Princess. “But I think you need another mattress. I felt like I was sleeping on a lump as big as a bowling ball.”

The King and Queen were satisfied. The Prince and Princess were married. And everyone lived happily. Though maybe not completely honestly ever after.

**Task 2. Find all nouns, adjectives and verbs in the text and put them into columns. Then subclassify the verbs into regular and irregular ones.**

*Specific aim:* to train the students to understand the classification, to distinguish the groups of similar features

*Skills involved:* to train the students to apply classification

### Assignment

**Try to think of another possible classification from any of the texts given in Activities 1-10.**

**(Re)organization** is another frequent, and popular with students, reading activity that can be used with students to engage not only their knowledge of cohesion and coherence but also their critical thinking. This can be done by teachers themselves if they have two texts (shorter texts are recommended), they can cut them into pieces comprising sentences or paragraphs, jumble them (possibly put in an envelope), and let the students put the text in a logical order. The texts chosen do not have to be just stories, which usually require respect for chronological order, they can be, for example, instructions (e.g. how to change a battery together with how to withdraw money from an ATM) or recipes.

### Sample text for reorganization

*Specific aim:* to understand the logical or chronological sequence

*Skills involved:* understanding the relation between parts of a text

**Task 1. Here are two very short stories but the sentences of each story are out of order and the two stories have been mixed. Can you separate the sentences belonging to story 1 from those belonging to story 2 and then reorder the sentences so that you can get two meaningful stories?**

1 His friend was upset and told him to hurry up.

2 “When I make out my report it will be easier to write “King Street” as the place of occurrence.”

3 “Whatever are you doing that for?” asked a bystander.

4 Two burglars broke into a bank.

5 He replied: “Don’t worry. It will take a bit longer, but we’ll drive the fingerprint department crazy.”

6 The policeman replied with a knowing look:

7 One went up to the safe, took off his shoes and socks and started moving the combinations with his toes.

8 A horse had dropped dead in a street named Nebuchadnezzar Street and a policeman was laboriously dragging the corner into the next street.

Story 1: .....

Story 2: .....

### Assignment

**Prepare a task for students with two mixed texts; mix two stories or two sets of instructions or recipes. You can use the aforementioned idea of mixing the instructions on how to change a battery together with how to withdraw money from an ATM.**

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Autor: Mgr. Gabriela Chmelíková, PhD.

Recenzenti: doc. PaedDr. Juraj Miština, PhD.  
doc. Mgr. Elena Kováčiková, PhD.

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