

Reading Techniques

María Emilia Acosta & Juan Carlos Castillo
University of Nariño

READING TECHNIQUES

Everyone reads with some kind of purpose in mind. For instance, to keep up with the news, to obtain specific information or simply for pleasure. Effective reading means being able to read accurately and efficiently, understanding as much of a text as one needs in order to achieve one's purpose.

Reading in a foreign language like English can be difficult without knowing some specific reading techniques. This article is intended for students who want to acquire reading ability. On the other hand, we want to encourage them to react to what they read, so that they can sharpen their intellectual and emotional reactions. For this reason we have included a variety of rhetorical patterns and many types of discourse are used in the exercises, e.g. essays, short stories, meditations, journalistic pieces, and poems. The level of diction ranges from the relaxed formality to the biting satire because we believe that the only way students can discover their own voices is by becoming acquainted with the voices of others. (Kirsznner, 1992).

1. READING FOR GENERAL IDEAS

The most important activity to do when reading for general ideas is to identify the main topic. Sometimes it is difficult for the students to see what the main ideas or topics of a passage are, or to distinguish between important and unimportant information. Therefore, in this kind of exercise the students should read for the

general sense rather than for the meaning of every word. (Grellet, F. 1981).

Classroom activity:

Tell the students to read over the two columns. Then have them match the columns. They have to take into consideration that the title of a book most of the time gives them the topic of it. You can end this exercise with some open pair work across the class.

Book

Chapter

1. How to become a writer
 - a. Human behavior
2. Introduction to psychology
 - b. Windsurfing
3. Climates of the world
 - c. Writing techniques
4. Banking and making purchases
 - d. Sculpture, poetry and theater
5. Types of government
 - e. Saute, stir-fry and roast
6. The media and the press
 - f. Pollution
7. Some medical tests
 - g. Animal, flowers and trees
8. Astrophysics
 - h. Bank loan
9. Popular sports of the century
 - i. Monarchy, and Democracy
10. Genetic Engineering
 - j. Radio and television
11. Ways of cooking food
 - k. Seasons and months
12. General branches of arts
 - l. Blood pressure

Classroom activity:

In this exercise the students should read the following story, and find out what is the main idea. Be sure to ask for reasons for their answers.

I'm a sales clerk in a store and, basically, I like my job. The best thing about it is that I only have to work part time . So I have time to study. Also, I get a discount on anything I buy in the store and don't have to work much overtime. Of course, there are some disadvantages. For one thing, I make one of the lowest salaries of all my friends. But probably the worst thing is when the customers are rude. I have to be polite and it is very hard. However, even though the job doesn't have many advantages, I don't plan to quit because I have time to do the things I want. And even though the salary is low, I can live on it. (Lozano and Sturtevant , 13 – 17).

- a. People living alone have special habits and routines.
- b. Ordinary activities can be very difficult at night.
- c. Advantages and disadvantages of a job
- d. Going out of the house and working.

2. **READING FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION:** When you read for specific information, it is important to locate the information that you are looking for. It is not always necessary to read the whole text, instead, you should concentrate on the relevant parts of a paragraph on a selective way looking for the answer to a specific question. The following exercises set the student on a variety of different tasks in order to practice this type of reading. (Daneman, M. 1988).

Classroom activity:

Have students read the article about Mr. Sanchez. Ask them later to write a piece of advice for him. Provide additional examples such as: Miss Lopez is visiting Denmark , is there any advice for her? And so on.

Mr. Sanchez is the representative for a firm which manufactures shoes. He is from Colombia, he is going to France to see if he can sell his company products within this market. He doesn't know anything about customs and protocol in this country. Can you give him any specific advice?

Read the following passage.

In Denmark a visitor who is invited to a business associate's home should take flowers or some unusual delicacy. In Japan certain guests at evening business gatherings will leave early. They should be allowed to leave without effusive good-byes. Good office manners in Indonesia require the visitor to present a business card immediately. If no card is offered, long delays may result. Young Korean businessmen expect their wives to be invited by foreigners to attend business or pleasure meetings in the evening. They also expect their wives to decline the invitation. The French, however, prefer a business visitor to sponsor a special occasion after major dealings, if you are planning to send flowers never send chrysanthemums, they are for funerals. In the Arab world, the word *no* must be mentioned three times before it is accepted. In contrast, it is considered good business manners to make many and long efforts to pick up the check. (Greenall and Swan, 76 – 77).

Which one is your advice for this businessman in order to succeed in his

business trip? -----

Classroom activity:

Have the students work in pairs for this activity. Ask them to read the following recipe and find five basic ingredients of Lebanese cooking. Go around the classroom and check the pairs' work. Next, call on different pairs to share the information found with the class.

- 1.-----
- 2.-----
- 3.-----
- 4.-----
- 5.-----

Place the meat and onions in a saucepan, and add seasoning and cinnamon. Cover with water, bring to the boil, cover and simmer until tender and most of the water evaporated. Remove the cinnamon stick. Bring the yoghurt to the boil and, stirring well, add the meat and onions. Simmer for fifteen minutes. Crush the garlic with a little salt. Fry it in the clarified butter. Stir into stew. Serve hot with rice or ground wheat. (Greenall, 29).

Classroom activity:

For this exercise students can work in groups. The teacher will provide each group with two articles, one including several kinds of mistakes, and the other one without. The latter is supposed to be the guide or original article. The students should correct the factual errors and substitute them with the correct

information according to the guide article. This activity encourages students to look for specific information. On the other hand, they can create these kinds of exercises to share with the classmates, and develop a healthy competence among them; the most successful group will be the one that corrects more articles in a minimum period of time.

2. INFERENCE:

This technique can be used by the students when they need to understand unfamiliar words, complex sentences or linking words.

UNKNOWN WORDS:

The best way for the students to deal with a new word is to try to work out what it means or make a guess at the meaning according to the context, for instance, prefixes are often used to give adjectives a negative or an opposite meaning. On the other hand, suffixes can change the word class and the meaning of the word. Equally important, for the students to know is that many words in English are formed from Latin roots. (Daneman, M. 1988).

Classroom activity:

Have the students work in small groups. Call different group members to read aloud the following paragraph. Then ask the students to guess the meaning of the word "zip". Next have them compare their answers. Finally, ask them to say the correct answer aloud or write it on the board. Encourage the students to comment and correct.

Zip was stopped during the war and only after the war did it become popular. What a difference it has made to our lives. It keeps

people at home much more. It has made the remote parts of the world more real to us. Photographs show a country, but only *zip* makes us feel that a foreign country is real. Also we can see scenes in the street, big occasions are *zipped*. Perhaps the suffers from *zip* are the notable people, who, as they step of an airplane, have to face the battery of *zip* cameras and know that every movement, every gesture will be seen by millions of people. Politicians not only have to speak well; they now have to have what is called a *zip* personality. Perhaps we can sympathize when members of parliament say that they do not want debates to be *zipped*. (Grellet, 32).

Zip means: 1- cinema
2- photography
3- television
4- telephone

Classroom activity:

For this exercise the students should read the passage below as many times as necessary. Then ask them to choose the best meaning for the words or expressions in the context of the passage. You can put students into small groups to discuss this activity.

There is every reason to believe that gadget design will continue to develop in the future and that the consumer of 2010 will spend more money than ever before on all sorts of strange devices. The eighties saw very big advances in technology, which have been used to manufacture a wide range of products that you can buy in the high street, like pocket and watch computers, calculators, portable stereo units, car and mobile telephones. By the next century however, these gadgets will seem old-fashioned. Tomorrow's gadgets will have to be mobile-easy to use, compact

and attractive to look at. The design of the gadgets in the pictures has been made possible by big advances in miniaturization techniques. (Greenall and Pye, 32,33,34).

Consumer: a) buyer b)business person
c) shopkeeper

wide range: a) large number of different things b) a lot of one particular thing c) something very big

compact: a) pleasant to look at b) small and practical c)colorful

miniaturization
techniques: a) electronics b) ways of making things very small c) ways of making things quickly.

LINKING WORDS:

Another important matter is to train students in the use of linking or transitional words in order to recognize the communicative and intrinsic value of the text, and more specifically, to achieve clear and coherent communication. In other words, the students will be able to see distinct relationships between sentences and paragraphs, following the main and subordinate ideas easily and, as a result, understand the purpose and message of the text. These connectors will also help to understand the development of the argument because they act like signals to indicate how or when something occurs in time, to indicate sequence, to repeat, to provide an example, to concede, to conclude or to summarize, to add a point, to compare, to contrast, to indicate cost and effect, to divide or to classify, to indicate a spatial arrangement, to emphasize or to intensify, and to connect clauses. (Greenall, S. and Pye, D. 1991):

Classroom activity:

Have the students read the following text and fill in the blanks with these words: *but, to, and, because or however*, so that the text makes sense. Give them some minutes, and then ask for their answers and reasons. Withhold the correct answers until there has been a bit of debate on the subject.

WHY DOES THE TOWER OF PISA LEAN?

The tower of Pisa is the bell tower of the cathedral of Pisa in Tuscany, Italy, It leans, when the building was half completed, the soil under one half of the circular structure began to subside. Work on the tower was begun in 1173, was discontinued for a century after the subsidence In 1275 architects devised a plan to compensate for the tilt. Two storeys, the third and the fifth, were built out of the line with the others and closer to the vertical in an effort to alter the tower's centre of gravity. the leaning has continued to increase gradually throughout the centuries. Pumping keep water away from the surrounding ground and the injection of cement grout into the foundation and the surrounding subsoil have been tried in recent years, without success. (Porter, 15).

UNDERSTANDING SENTENCE STRUCTURES:

For students to be able to cope with the sentence structures they should be trained in recognizing the core of the sentence, for instance , the subject and the verb. In addition the students have to be able to identify the basic parts of speech in English such as: article, noun, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, pronoun and gerund. (Nuttal, C. 1992).

Classroom activity:

Have the students read the following sentences and underline the subject and the main verb in each of them. Go round and help them. Then go through the answers with the class.

'One team that performed more than two hundred operations found that nearly half the patients underwent a change of personality. In one publicized case in English a young salesman with an apparent compulsion to gamble was arrested for larceny'.

Classroom activity:

This is a challenging exercise. Ask students to read the following sentences and match subject and verbs. Monitor carefully and correct as necessary. Get feedback from the class.

Mostly because of inflation, but also because taxes have been creeping upward, the actual buying power that people have been getting from the money in their paychecks has declined by nearly 4% over the past twelve months. (Grellet, 35-36)

Taxes have been creeping upward
Buying power have been getting
People has declined

4. SKIMMING: The students should use skimming techniques when they need to go through the reading material quickly in order to get the gist of it, to know how it is organized, or to get an idea of the tone or the intention of the writer. (Grellet, F. 1981).

Classroom activity:

Have the students read this poem by N., Josefowitz: (Adapted from : Greenal and Pye , 42 – 45). For this exercise students

should work in groups of four or five. You know your students best. So you decide on how to organize them. Just move your students around if all the lively ones usually sit together. Ask them to give an opinion about the intention of the writer. Choose the best answer for the presentation of the class after you have a full class discussion .

IMPRESSIONS FROM AN OFFICE

The family picture is on HIS desk.
 Ah, a solo, responsible family man.
 The family picture is on HER desk.
 Umm, her family will come before her career.
 HIS desk is cluttered.
 He's obviously a hard worker and a busy man.
 HER desk is cluttered.
 She's obviously disorganized scatterbrain.
 HE is talking with his co-workers.
 He must be discussing the latest deal.
 SHE is talking with her co-workers.
 She must be gossiping.
 HE'S not at his desk.
 He must be at a meeting.
 SHE'S not at her desk.
 She must be in the ladies' room.
 HE'S not in the office.
 He's meeting customers.
 SHE'S not in the office.
 She must be out shopping.
 HE'S having lunch with the boss.
 He's on his way up.
 SHE'S having lunch with the boss.
 They must be having an affair.
 The boss criticized HIM.
 He'll improve his performance.
 The boss criticized HER.
 She'll be very upset.
 HE got an unfair deal.
 Did he get angry?
 SHE got an unfair deal.
 Did she cry?
 HE'S getting married.

He'll get more settled.
 SHE'S getting married.
 She'll get pregnant and leave.
 HE'S having a baby.
 He'll need a raise.
 SHE'S having a baby.
 She'll cost the company in maternity benefits.
 HE'S going on a business trip.
 It's good for his career.
 SHE'S going on a business trip.
 What does her husband say?
 HE'S leaving for a better job.
 He knows how to recognize a good opportunity.
 SHE'S leaving for a better job.
 Women are not dependable.

Classroom activity:

Ask the students to answer the following questions in small groups. Get feedback from the class , and invite discussion of the answers. Ask: Why do you think that is right? , Why isn't that the answer? and so on.

1. After reading the poem, would you describe it as: - Factual? - Critical? - Funny? - Ironic? - Serious?
2. What would you say was the aim of the author in writing this poem?
 - To give examples of how hard women work?.
 - To illustrate the variety of work for men and women?.
 - To show that women are just as ambitious as men in their work?.
 - To indicate that there are different standards for men and women at work?.
3. Answer the following questions related to the poem.
 - Do you think that the poet is a woman or a man? Can you say why?

- Do you think the attitude to women at work described in the poem is justified?
- What is the main idea of the poem?

5. PREVIEWING:

This technique involves using the table of contents, the appendix, the preface, the chapter and paragraph heading in order to find out where the required information is likely to be. It is particularly useful when skimming and scanning are used as study skills.

The students can practice this technique locating an article in a newspaper or having a few minutes to get an idea of a book through the text on the back cover and the table of contents.

Students who read too slowly will easily get discouraged using this technique, therefore it is important to help them to increase the reading speed. One common way to do so is to give students passages to read and to ask them to time themselves. This should encourage the students to read more. (Grellet, 15-18).

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