

INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT 1. READING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

1. Academic purposes for reading (Grabe 2009: Table 1.1, p. 8)
 - 1.1. Reading to search for information
 - 1.2. Reading for quick understanding
 - 1.3. Reading to learn
 - 1.4. Reading to integrate information
 - 1.5. Reading to evaluate, critique, and use information
 - 1.6. Reading for general comprehension [not considered for our project]
2. General skills and strategies:
 - 2.1. Scanning
 - 2.2. Skimming
 - 2.3. Word recognition & vocabulary
 - 2.4. Syntactic parsing
 - 2.5. Recognising discourse structure/genre
 - 2.6. Reading strategies that support comprehension
 - 2.7. Fluency
 - 2.8. Critical reading
3. Vocabulary
 - 3.1. West's (1953) General Service List (<http://www.newgeneralservicelist.org/>)
 - 3.2. Academic Word List [it can be bought, and it's cheap] (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist/>)
 - 3.3. Discipline-specific vocabulary – to be determined.
4. Genre/discourse structure
 - 4.1. Text structure (top-down)
 - 4.2. Genre: linguistic features (bottom-up) [especially those features that indicate certain moves]
 - 4.3. Author's stance
5. Texts to be used for instructional purposes
6. Activities to include in the app

2. General skills/strategies

'Strategies represent conscious decisions taken by the reader, skills are deployed unconsciously' (Urquhart & Weir 1988: 97).

2.1. Scanning

Look quickly through a text to locate specific symbol or group of symbols (word, phrase, name, figure, date). Focus on local comprehension; most text will be ignored. Rapid rate of reading; no sequencing necessary.

Operations → looking for/matching:

- Specific words/phrase
- Figures/percentages
- Dates of particular events
- Specific items in an index/inventory

2.2. Skimming

Skimming → reading for gist. What is this text about? Selective reading, building of macrostructure; little detail.

Purposes:

- Establishing general sense of the text
- Quickly establishing macropropositional structure as an outline summary
- Establishing relevance of text to needs

Operations:

- Identifying source
- Reading titles & subtitles
- Reading abstract carefully
- Reading introductory and concluding paragraphs carefully
- Reading 1st & last sentence of each paragraph carefully
- Identifying discourse markers
- Noting repeated key content words
- Identifying markers of importance
- Skipping clusters of detail
- Glancing any non-verbal info

2.3. Word recognition & vocabulary development

Without understanding the words, it is not possible to understand a text.

Operations:

- Building word-recognition automaticity with high-frequency words
- Developing a large recognition vocabulary
- Looking for structural clues
- Determining grammatical function
- Using morphology: internal structure
- Inferencing meaning from context
- Using dictionary only for key words

- Relating new word to known word
- Contrast word with another one in the sentence
- Using knowledge of the world
- Relating a word to a word in L1
- Recognizing variance in meanings in words

2.4. Syntactic parsing

Once the words are understood, the structure needs to be processed to access meaning.

Operations:

- Recognizing syntactic categories for new words
- Using syntactic information as context information
- Disambiguating lexical meanings and discourse organization

Aspects to focus on: passives, delimitation of heavy NPs, distinguishing nouns from verbs.

2.5. Recognising discourse organization/genre

General and local features of texts.

Operations:

- Recognizing genre clues
- Determining main ideas
- Recognizing discourse patterns in text

[We'll deal more with this in the section on genre.]

2.6. Reading strategies that support comprehension

It is very important for students to understand the main idea of a text, and this involves reading the text carefully

Strategies:

- Separating explicitly stated main ideas from supporting detail by recognising topic sentences or lexical indicators of importance
- Generating a representation of the text as a whole
- Understanding the development of an argument and/or logical organisation
- Making propositional information inferences, typically answering questions with *where* and *when*
- Making explanatory inferences concerned with motivation, cause, consequence, answering questions with *why* and *how*.

2.7. Fluency

The minimum speed for good comprehension is 200 wpm.

2.8. Critical reading

Within an academic environment, it is important to read critically, beyond the literal meaning of the text. This includes:

- Recognizing author's purpose
- Recognizing author's point of view
- Making inferences
- Drawing conclusions

- Separating fact from opinion
- Separating own opinion from text
- Evaluating arguments
 - Generalizations with supporting info: Do examples sufficiently support general claims made?
 - Inductive & deductive arguments: Is structure of argument clear?
 - Comparison and contrast: Are items compared actually similar? Are contrasts differences? Do similarities & contrasts have effect/import claimed?
 - Cause & effect: Is the causal relationship between factors cited and results demonstrated?
 - Chronological order: Are events mentioned of equal importance?
 - Classification: Are the categories really major? Do you agree with author's definition of categories & choices of examples for each?
 - Process: Is description effective? Is there enough info to understand & replicate procedure?
 - Definition: Is it clear? Can readers use the term on their own? Are illustrations persuasive & informative? Do you agree with definition? Why? Why not?
 - Introduction: Does it adequately define problem & establish importance? Is lit review adequate?
 - Materials & Methods: Are they adequately described and justified?
 - Results: Is data presented clearly and in enough detail to be explanatory? Do generalizations clearly follow from data?
 - Discussion: Do claims made follow from data? Are implications and practical applications convincingly presented?

4. Genre/discourse structure

4.1. Text structure

- Distinguishing general claims from data to support them
- Distinguishing deduction from induction
- Recognizing rhetorical patterns:
 - Comparison and contrast
 - Cause and effect
 - Chronological order
 - Classification
 - Process
 - Definition
- Recognizing genre conventions
 - Introduction
 - Materials and method
 - Results
 - Discussion

4.2. Genre

- Situational characteristics (discourse participants, medium (oral/written), temporary/permanent, etc.).
- Genre markers (linguistic features that typify the genre, e.g. *once upon a time*).
- Cohesive devices

- Reference words and substitutes (personal pronouns, demonstratives, *so, one(s), the same*, etc.)
- Ellipsis
- Comparison (*similar, same, identical, equal, different, other, additional, else, likewise, so, more, fewer, less*, etc.)
- Lexical cohesion (repetition, synonyms, near synonyms, superordinate and general words)
- Lexical signalling: transitions adverbials, transition sentences and lexical words (*and, namely, but, in spite of this, as a result, because, since, for the purpose of, thus, in order to, if/then, so, therefore, the reason, led to, provide, required*, etc.)
- Patterns of co-occurring linguistic features.
- Information structuring: signs in text that signal the flow of information, differentiate from more important, signal given (typically at the beginning) and new info (toward the end).
- Topic continuity systems: ways of tracking topical information: topic continuity, topic persistence and referent competition.
- Plausibility

References

- Dubin, Fraida, David E. Eskey & William Grabe. 1986. *Teaching Second Language Reading for Academic Purposes*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Grabe, William. 2009. *Reading in a Second Language. Moving from Theory to Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nation, Paul. 2009. *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing*. New York: Routledge.
- Silberstein, Sandra. 1994. *Techniques and Resources in Teaching Reading*. Oxford: OUP.
- Sandy Urquhart & Cyril Weir. 1998. *Reading in a Second Language. Process, Product and Practice*. London & New York: Longman.

5. Texts to be used

1. Topic: education.
2. Two types of texts:
 - 2.1. B1 - Texts not fully academic related to education topics, made more “academic-sounding” by means of a series of changes (to be fully developed).
 - 2.2. B2 – Papers from academic journals, simplified to make them accessible to users, by means of a series of changes (to be fully developed).

6. Activities to include in the app

6.1. Vocabulary

According to Grabe (2009), for effective reading, a learner should know 95% of the words in the text. Given the level of the potential users of the app, they will know the first 2000 words of West's General Service List (1953), so in the app the emphasis will be put on the Academic Word List (AWL) (Coxhead 2000). Grouped into the AWL's sublists (starting with the most frequent words in each), different types of exercises will be created:

- 1) Multiple choice
- 2) Match 10 sentences with a blank space with 10 words (link 2)
- 3) Gapfill (link 3)
- 4) Exercises in which students first read a text and then do a gapfill
- 5) Exercises to help students guess the meaning of unknown words using affixes (link 7)

Useful links

1. <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist/> (AWL)
2. <http://www.englishvocabularyexercises.com/AWL/id17.htm> (Matching exercises with hotpotatoes)
3. <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/awlgapmaker.htm> (It creates gapfill exercises with any text you want.)
4. <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/awlhighlighter.htm> (It highlights AWL words of any text you want.)
5. <http://www.uefap.com/vocab/vocfram.htm> (many vocabulary resources)
6. <http://www.uefap.com/vocab/build/bldfram.htm> (list of useful affixes)
7. <http://www.uefap.com/vocab/exercise/exfram.htm>

6.2. Skimming

- Purpose: get general sense of text, quickly.
- Students read text in a given time and then solve exercises.
- Exercises:
 - T/F statements
 - Y/N questions
 - Multiple choice questions

6.3. Scanning

- Purpose: read text quickly to locate specific symbol or group of symbols (word, phrase, name, figure, date).
- Students read text in a given time and then solve exercises.
- Exercises:
 - Write specific symbol or group of symbols

6.4. Recognize discourse structure

- Purpose: identify the linguistic elements that signal discourse structure, cohesive devices (connectors, repetition, synonyms, near synonyms, superordinates and general words); distinguish main ideas from supporting detail.
- Students read text and then solve exercises.
- Exercises:
 - Highlight specific elements in text, starting with easy ones and increasing difficulty gradually
 - Multiple choice questions
 - Fill in a table, chart, graph, timeline, tree or similar graphic form
 - Choose the order of sentences that would make a good outline of text
 - Match main ideas and supporting information across two columns
 - Reorganise scrambled paragraphs and sentences to make a good summary

6.5. Recognize rhetorical patterns

- Purpose: read the text and identify rhetorical patterns: comparison and contrast, cause and effect, chronological order, classification, process, definition.
- Students read text and then solve exercises.
- Exercises:
 - T/F statements
 - Y/N questions
 - Multiple choice questions
 - Fill in a table, chart, graph, timeline, tree or similar graphic form

6.6. Develop reading fluency

- Purpose: push students to read faster than they would.
- Students do paced readings and then solve exercises. Especially good with 400-word texts. Students are imposed a given pace, e.g. 200 WPM. Text is divided into 100-word chunks. After 30 s, they move to next chunk (even if they haven't finished), etc. The score in comprehension should be 7 or 8 out of 10. App will log these results so that students can keep track of how they are doing.
- Exercises:
 - T/F statements
 - Y/N questions
 - Multiple choice questions
- Students do timed readings and then solve exercises. Texts of 500-1000 words. Students take the time they need (which is logged). The score in comprehension should be 7 or 8 out of 10. App will log these results so that students can keep track of how they are doing.
- Exercises:
 - T/F statements
 - Y/N questions
 - Multiple choice questions

6.7. General comprehension of texts

- Purpose: read a text and fully understand it.
- Students read text in a given time and then solve exercises.
- Exercises:
 - T/F statements
 - Y/N questions
 - Pronominal questions: *who, what, when, how, why*, etc.
 - Multiple choice questions
 - Sentence completion. 4 types: 1) exact copies of sentences in text; 2) missing words can be found in text; 3) sentences not exactly as the ones in text, but talking about the same idea; 4) missing words are not in text, so learners must use their vocabulary knowledge.
 - Information transfer (diagram).

Features of good comprehension questions

- 1) Answering questions should require reading of text, not background knowledge alone, nor from the way the questions are formulated.
- 2) The question should not use the exact words from the text. However, if using paraphrases, it might be the case that the learner doesn't know the words used for the paraphrase.
- 3) Questions should measure reasonable comprehension, not memory, not small detail, no calculations or logical deduction beyond normal comprehension.
- 4) Order questions consistently with the order of the info in the text.

Issues in question design

- 1) Questions should not contain harder vocabulary than the text.
- 2) Questions should have only one unequivocal answer.
- 3) If the student understands the text they should be able to answer the question.
- 4) Rejection of alternatives on grammatical grounds should not be allowed.
- 5) Skills not related to reading, e.g. mathematics, should not be tested.
- 6) Incidental insignificant info should not be tested.
- 7) Questions that require stylistic or other ambiguous judgments should be avoided.

References