

高等学校学术英语 (EAP) 系列教材



# Reading

English for Academic Study

# 学术英语阅读

(爱尔兰) John Slaght

编著

with (英) Anne Pallant

外语教学与研究出版社  
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John Slaght, April 2012

# Introduction

## Aims of the course

The purpose of this book is to help you develop the academic reading skills you need to deal effectively with the reading and research you will need to carry out during your academic study. This course will particularly focus on reading for a specific academic purpose, working on effective reading strategies, detailed comprehension of sentences and paragraphs, and text analysis.

## Structure of the course

**Unit structure:** There are eight units in the book. Each unit explores a key aspect of reading, such as *Considering the title and abstract*, and teaches it in the context of a specific topic area, e.g., *Growing grey*. You will have the opportunity to read texts on these and other topics in the part of Reading texts. The reading tasks in any unit will be based on the unit topic.

**Key reading skills:** These are introduced where it is felt you need specific information on an area of reading. They usually appear at the end of a task and can be referred to either before you start the task, during the task, or when you have completed it.

**Study tips:** These are included for ease of reference when you are revising what you have studied. They either summarise the outcome of a series of activities or are a summary of other information contained in the unit.

**Unit summary:** Each unit is followed by a unit summary, giving you the opportunity to reflect on what you have learnt.

## Additional material

**Reading texts:** Some texts related with the unit topics are provided on pages 133–209 for students to read and practise reading skills and strategies.

**Glossary:** Key words or phrases are explained in the glossary on pages 210–212.

## Working with the course

When you are reading in another language, you not only need to deal with the vocabulary and grammar of the text, but also understand the writing conventions

associated with it. This can be particularly challenging with academic texts where the written conventions are even more important. The book will help you in two ways by:

- providing you with guided instruction on how to understand the structure of academic text
- giving you the opportunity to practise reading in a similar context to the one you will use in your future studies

What you put into the course will determine how much you get out of it. Obviously, if you want to improve your academic reading, it is essential to practise the skill. You should therefore prepare well for the sessions, as well as participating actively in them.

## Course aims

### 1 Reading for a specific academic purpose

This will help you find the relevant information in written sources that will help you complete an academic task. For example, you may need to:

- **combine information from a variety of sources** in order to complete an assignment on a specific question
- **research a new topic for an introductory overview** in order to assist with listening to a series of lectures on that topic
- **add new knowledge to what you already know about a topic** in order to carry out a variety of functions; add to your general understanding of a topic, write about your specialist area of interest, take notes for future exam revision, etc.

### 2 Working on effective reading strategies

The main strategies you will be looking at are:

#### a. Skimming

This involves looking at a text *quickly* for one of the following purposes:

- identifying what the text is about (the topic)
- identifying the main idea of the text
- deciding how useful the text is for your purposes
- deciding how you will make use of the text

Skimming a text might involve looking at some or all of the following features of the text:

- title
- section headings
- abstract or summary provided by the writer
- first and last paragraphs



- first and last sentences of intervening paragraphs
- topic sentence(s) in each paragraph

Another form of skimming is previewing a book to decide how useful it is for your purposes. In this situation, you might also look at one or more of the following:

- information about the writer and/or publication details
- contents page
- foreword and/or introduction
- index

#### b. **Predicting**

This means using what you already know about the topic, what you want to learn about the topic from the text, and what you have learnt from your previewing, to guess what kind of information the text will contain and *how useful* it will be. You will be surprised how much you already know about a text before you even begin reading. Brainstorming your prior knowledge will help you to understand the text.

#### c. **Scanning**

This involves *finding words* (or other symbols, such as figures) that have particular importance for you. When you are scanning, you already know the form of the words or symbols you are looking for. When you scan, you normally focus on small parts of the text only.

#### d. **Search reading**

This involves quickly finding *ideas* that are important for you. This is different from scanning, because you don't know the exact words you are looking for in advance and cannot make a direct match.

#### e. **Identifying the main ideas**

This involves understanding the writer's *main points*. It may be possible to do this quite quickly after skimming the text. However, with more difficult texts, it may only be possible to identify the main ideas after more detailed reading.

#### f. **Careful reading**

This involves reading *slowly and carefully* so that you have a clear understanding of the text (or the part of the text that you are most interested in). You might do this in order to understand the *details* of the text or to *infer meaning* that is not directly stated (see g. below).

#### g. **Inferring**

This involves obtaining meaning from the text that the writer has *not explicitly stated*. Sometimes the writer expects you to fill gaps in the text for it to make sense. Sometimes

you may wish to infer *why the writer wrote the text*, i.e., the writer's purpose, and also the writer's attitude to what he/she is writing about.

#### h. Dealing with unfamiliar words

When you find a word you don't understand in a text, you first need to decide whether it is *necessary* to understand the word. Perhaps you can understand enough of the text without understanding the word – in which case you can ignore it. Alternatively, the context in which the word is located may allow you to guess the meaning of the word well enough to continue reading. If neither of these applies, you may have to look up the word in a dictionary. If you find you are using a dictionary so much that you cannot read the text at a reasonable speed, the text may be too specialised for you; in this case you should consider finding another one which deals with the same topic in a more generalised way.

An approach to dealing with new vocabulary is to decide whether you:

- need to know the word now to help you understand the text and use it later under different circumstances. In this case, you will need some way of recording the word, e.g., in a vocabulary notebook. You will also have to decide whether to rely on working out the meaning of the word from context, or whether you need to check in a dictionary.
- only need to know the word now to help you understand the text. This is often the case with technical words or low-frequency words; these are words that are not often used in English, even by native speakers of the language, except for specialist reasons. Of course, if you are reading a text in your academic area, you will need to know certain specialist vocabulary. You will need to record this vocabulary as well as use it so it becomes part of your active vocabulary, i.e., words that you use to communicate effectively.
- don't need to know this word either now or in the future. If the word does not prevent you from understanding the rest of the text, you probably do not need to worry about it. If the word occurs several times, however, you may feel it is necessary to work out its meaning or look it up and record it.

### 3 Detailed comprehension of sentences and paragraphs

In an academic context, much of your reading work will involve dealing with complete texts and extracting information from them in various ways, i.e., reading purposefully in order to make use of content. However, in order to fulfil your reading purpose, you may sometimes find it necessary to have a very precise understanding of specific sentences and paragraphs. There may be obstacles to your understanding in terms of grammar or ideas, or the text's organisation or a combination of these. This is one area the course will help you solve.



Detailed comprehension involves analysing the relationship between ideas within a specific sentence or between a sequence of sentences of up to paragraph length – or even beyond. This precise knowledge might be required, for example, to infer meaning, to view the content critically, to enhance overall understanding or to formulate precise understanding.

#### 4 Text analysis

It is often helpful to understand the way a text is organised in order to make the best use of the information it contains. The organisation of a text can be considered at the global level; for example, the way that the text is organised into sections and paragraphs according to the purpose of the text and the type of text. In a report of an experiment, for example, it is very common to see the pattern of organisation:

- title
- abstract
- introduction/background
- methods
- results
- conclusions
- references/bibliography

Another aspect of organisation that can be useful to examine is how information is organised logically at the local level, i.e., within complex sentences or paragraphs.

As you have seen, there are many different aspects of academic reading that you will consider during the course. Although it is important to be aware of all these different aspects, it is also important to:

- **develop a flexible reading style.** Becoming a better academic reader is not just about mastering different aspects of reading. It is also important to decide which is the best way to read a text, depending on the particular academic purpose that you have for reading it.
- **remember that the more you read, the better you will read.** Regular independent reading outside the classroom is essential for any student wishing to develop reading abilities such as fluency, greater reading speed, vocabulary acquisition and the strategies associated with successful reading.

You can improve your academic reading level by making decisions about:

- **why** you are reading
- **what** you are reading
- **how** you are reading
- **how well** you are reading

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# Reading for academic purposes

## In this unit you will:

- 1 practise and review the reading strategies outlined in the introduction
- 2 develop strategies for deciding whether a text is useful
- 3 build vocabulary through reading
- 4 identify the organisation of a text

Text 1a contains information on how to read for academic purposes more effectively.

## Task 1 Reading for general understanding

The exercise below will give you practice in reading for general understanding. It is therefore important that you do not stop to look up any of the unknown words (you will get a fuller understanding of difficult vocabulary after completing some of the later tasks). The text in the part of Reading texts consists of six sections. The table on the next page contains seven headings that are possible summaries of the content for each section.



### 1.1 Read the instructions below.

- Read the summary headings and underline the most important word or words in each one. If necessary, your teacher will explain the meaning of the language used.
- Read Section 1 of the text and label the appropriate summary heading in the table.
- Discuss your answer with other students and/or your teacher.

#### Study tip

Reading for general meaning is a very important skill that will help you deal with the amount of reading at university. See **Skimming** in the Introduction on page IX.

Summary headings	Sections
Linking effective reading to vocabulary acquisition	1
Reading widely and critically	3
Good reasons for reading	4
The difficulties of reading academic texts ✓	2
The motivation behind reading ✓	3
Acquiring good reading habits ✓	6
The EAP reading syllabus	5

- 1.2 Now read and match Sections 2–6 to the appropriate summary headings in the table. One of the summary headings does not need to be used.

## Task 2 Reading for specific details

- 2.1 Read Text 1a again and find the answers to the following questions.

You will use some of your answers to complete another task later in the unit.

1. What type of reading material is Bassett (2010) concerned with?

Stories in an extensive reading programme.

2. Bassett believes the key to the best understanding of a text is ...

that

3. The greater the reader's reading ability, the greater their ...

4. What are the two main criteria for text selection for an EAP course?

### Study tip

Being able to read for specific detail is another important skill. See **Scanning, Search reading** and **Careful reading** in the Introduction on page X.