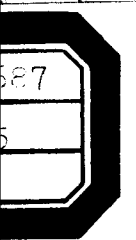


Clues to Meaning

**Strategies for
Better Reading Comprehension**



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Better Reading Comprehension**

Adina Levine Brenda Oded Stella Statman
Bar-Ilan University, Israel

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Introduction

Clues to Meaning is for upper-intermediate courses in English reading comprehension. Its purpose is to teach students how to read for meaning. The basic goal underlying all the sections in the book is to keep students motivated throughout the reading process.

Our assumption is that most students at the pre-university level have been reading texts word-for-word, in linear progression, without any appreciable use of cognitive strategies. *Clues to Meaning* is an attempt to force students to change their method of reading: to read in meaningful word groups, to see grammatical forms as markers of meaning, and to use strategies for predicting the structure and content of a passage.

The book is divided into four units. In Unit I, the structure of the English sentence is presented as a key to meaning. Students are shown how to divide the sentence into its basic elements and how to identify noun modifiers and adverbials as additional units of information. They thus learn to read in meaningful word groups instead of reading word-for-word. This enables students to predict the appearance of certain elements on the basis of form, position, and the kind of information these elements bring to the sentence.

Unit II presents verb forms as markers of meaning. Students are shown how specific tense forms mark sequence of actions; how the passive form indicates a change in the writer's focus from the doer to the situation; how modal forms express the writer's attitude toward the action; and how conditionals signal real or unreal conditions. The verb is thus seen not as an isolated grammatical form but as a clue to sentence comprehension.

Unit III introduces the process of reading as a guessing game. Reading is presented as a game between readers and the text. Students are encouraged to use the strategy of prediction throughout the reading process: to make use of their knowledge of the world, their knowledge of the subject, and the clues in the text to get new information. Like all good readers, students are encouraged to remain one step ahead of what they're reading.

Reading is presented as a movement from the global reading of a passage for general comprehension to a close reading for specific details. Global reading is introduced and practiced through skimming techniques. These help students discover the topic or problem, the main ideas, and the writer's point of view or conclusion.

After a global reading of the passage, students are ready for close reading. Here, too, they are trained to read with expectations of what will follow. Instead of looking up every unknown word in the dictionary, students are encouraged to guess the meaning of words on the basis of structural or contextual clues. In the same way, they

are shown how to find the references of substitution words and to make use of markers to predict the development of ideas within and between paragraphs.

To help students understand the development of ideas in the text, we have provided extensive training and practice in the most common rhetorical structures: sequencing of events, ordering of ideas, cause–result relationships, comparison–contrast relationships, and general statements *versus* specific examples.

Unit IV includes seven authentic reading passages on different topics, varying in length from 400 to 650 words. The activities that accompany these passages force students to apply the strategies learned in the earlier parts of the book. Each chapter begins with global reading activities that require skimming of the passage and ends with close reading for detail. The last activity in each unit is a summary activity reviewing the passage as a whole.

The innovative approach of this book is to equip students with the tools needed to find and use all the clues to meaning.

A. Levine B. Oded S. Statman

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The Authors

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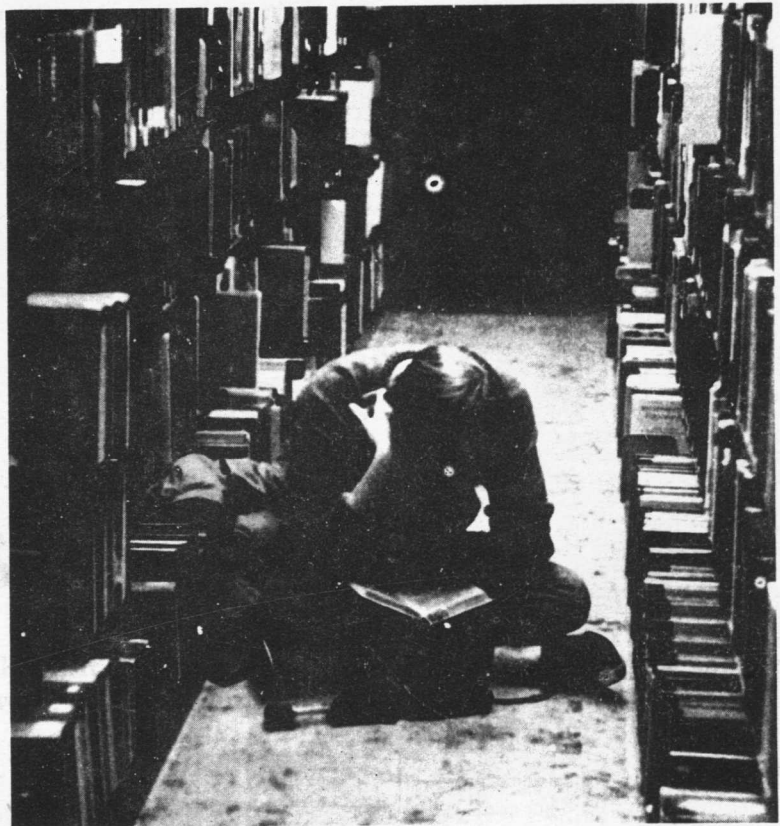
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Unit I



Sentence Structure as a Key to Meaning

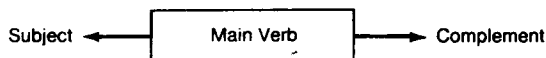
Many of us know some words in another language, but we cannot read texts in those languages. This is because reading requires more than knowing the meaning of individual words. We have to know how individual words combine together to produce a meaningful group and how the groups of words combine together to produce meaningful sentences. We can do this if we know the following:

1. which elements make up the basic sentence
2. what each element looks like (its form)
3. the position of each element in the sentence
4. what kind of information each element brings to the sentence.

Chapter 1

The Basic Sentence

The basic English sentence is made up of three elements: the subject, the main verb, and the complement.



Position: Note the position of the elements in a statement. The main verb is the focus, or center, of the sentence. The subject comes before the main verb and the complement follows the main verb.

Information: The information given by the subject tells us who or what the sentence is about. The main verb names the action or situation. The complement completes the information that is given by the subject and main verb.

Form: The subject can be

1. **One word**
Examples:

Economists study everyday life.
Studying requires concentration.

2. A group of words

Examples:

A strange noise at night frightened me.

To study in a university requires concentration.

3. A clause (a group of words that has a verb of its own)

Examples:

What he did shows much courage.

How students plan their work is important.

The verb of the basic sentence can be

1. One word

Examples:

The trains to London *depart* every hour.

The employees *waited* for the manager to arrive.

The mail carrier *delivers* letters every morning.

2. A group of words that consists of helping verbs (auxiliaries) and the *-ing* or past participle form of the main verb

Examples:

The criminal *was arrested* by the police.

Many medieval buildings *have been uncovered* by archaeologists.

The scientist *should have made* more detailed inquiries.

The patients *must have been waiting* here for over an hour.

Activity

Underline the verb in each of the sentences below.

1. Animal hearts have been used in transplant experiments.
2. The brown-haired, blue-eyed baby girl made history as the only person to live for more than a month with an animal-heart transplant.
3. Only a small number of animal-to-human heart transplants have been performed.
4. Transplant pioneer Dr. Christiaan Barnard of Cape Town, South Africa implanted a baboon heart next to the diseased heart of a 25-year-old woman in 1957.
5. Transplanting a baboon's heart could have saved the baby's life.

It's easier to divide the sentence into its units of meaning if we first find the main verb, which is the focus of the sentence. We can then find the subject, which comes before the main verb.

Activity

Divide the sentences below into their basic elements. The first one is done for you.

1. The members of the committee | decided | to postpone the meeting.
2. Driving without lights at night is dangerous.
3. To choose a suitable restaurant requires a lot of experience.
4. That he needs help has been clear for a long time.
5. What she knows about animals impressed me.
6. To water flowers in the middle of the day is foolish.
7. Discussing personal problems has helped young students.
8. Whoever reads this book will enjoy it.
9. Why he left the university has been puzzling me.
10. Whether the play is successful or not depends on the reaction of the audience.

Activity

Answer the question that follows each of the statements below. The first one is done for you. Note that the answer to the question (*who?* or *what?*) is the subject of the sentence.

1. To hear such terrible news frightens me.
What frightens me?
To hear such terrible news
2. What they decide today will influence our actions.
What will influence our actions?
3. Where you meet is important.
What is important?
4. How the money is divided depends on the government.
What depends on the government?
5. Joining a new club will be difficult for the girls.
What will be difficult for the girls?
6. That she reported the results of the experiment angered the scientist.
What angered the scientist?

7. Whoever finds the clue will solve the problem.
Who will solve the problem?
8. That we spend too much money on luxuries worries the government.
What worries the government?
9. Underlining the key words of a text helps the reader to remember the main points.
What helps the reader to remember the main points?
10. How she solves the problem shows her level of intelligence.
What shows her level of intelligence?

Now that we can identify the elements of the basic sentence, let's see how longer groups of words form meaningful units of information.

Chapter 2

Noun Modifiers as Additional Units of Information

A subject and complement may be a group of words. This word group can consist of a noun and a word or words that describe it.

Example:

The intelligent student wrote an exciting story about a stolen document.

The underlined word groups form units of information. Each unit consists of the main noun at the end of the group and the preceding word which describes it. This modifier (word which describes) answers the question *which?* or *what kind?* Let's look at another example of this kind of word group.

Example:

The psychology students passed the language test.

Note that the modifier in each unit is a noun. We have a combination of nouns in each group (noun + noun), where the main noun comes

second and the preceding word functions as a modifier. The position of the element determines its function in the word group.

Which students passed the test?
 the psychology students (students who are studying psychology)

What kind of test did they pass?
 the language test (a test dealing with language)

Study the following examples and note the difference in meaning between the noun + noun combinations in each pair of sentences. The word group changes its meaning according to the position of the elements.

Examples:

1. The tourists visited a market town.
 What did the tourists visit? *a town*
 What kind of town did they visit? *a market town*
2. The tourists visited the town market.
 What did the tourists visit? *the market*
 What kind of market did they visit? *the town market*

Activity

Read the following sentences. Note the noun + noun combinations. Answer the questions which follow each sentence. The first one is done for you.

1. Store employees are checked by the security staff before they leave.
 - a. Which employees are checked before they leave?
store employees
 - b. What kind of staff checks the employees?
security staff
2. The mathematics department introduced new instruction methods to its staff members.
 - a. Which department introduced new methods?
 - b. What kind of new methods were introduced?
 - c. Which members were introduced to the new methods?

3. Business leaders want to use the entertainment hall for an export exhibition.
 - a. What kind of leaders want to use the hall?

 - b. What kind of hall is it? _____
 - c. What kind of exhibition do they want? _____
4. The newspaper article criticized entertainment programs in state prisons.
 - a. What kind of article criticized the programs in state prisons? _____
 - b. What kind of programs were criticized? _____
 - c. Which prisons were discussed? _____
5. The language students took a difficult grammar test in the administration building.
 - a. Which students took the test? _____
 - b. What kind of a test was it? _____
 - c. In which building was the test given? _____

Activity

Read the short passage below. Underline all the modifier-noun word groups. Then answer the questions that follow the passage. The first one is done for you.

NEWSPAPER READING

The best way to know about world affairs, local news, and daily events is to read the newspaper regularly. The headlines emphasize important political and economic news, such as elections and campaign issues, tax increases, labor-management disputes, and strikes. The first page presents news items. Businessmen usually open their papers to the business section first. Many young men read the sports pages. Others enjoy the television guides. Some students read the book reviews and the movie reviews. There may also be articles on education problems and government programs. Newspapers have something for everyone.

1. What kind of reading is discussed in this passage?
newspaper reading