

# Reading and Thinking in English

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Discovering discourse

**Reading  
and  
Thinking  
in English**

**Discovering  
discourse**

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## Preface to the series

Reading and Thinking in English is an integrated course in reading comprehension for students of English as a foreign language.

A large number of people are learning English not to study the language itself but to study other subjects through English. Reading and Thinking in English is based on the belief that a special kind of course is required for students of English whose main need is to gain access to information through English. The course has been designed for a wide range of learners whose needs can be described as 'English for Academic Purposes'—advanced secondary school pupils preparing for tertiary education, students in universities and other tertiary institutions, adults whose profession requires them to make use of material in English. It is therefore intended to help students and others read textbooks, works of reference and general academic interest, sourcebooks and journals in English.

Sometimes these kinds of learner will consult specialized material in their own field, but they may also be required to read on a wide range of subjects. Consequently, *Reading and Thinking in English* presents a wide range of writing on topics of general academic interest. It can therefore be used by those following general courses of study as well as more specialist learners. It will also meet some of the needs of Modern Languages students.

The series starts at a near-beginner level. It is assumed that the beginning learner has a minimal knowledge of basic grammar and vocabulary—perhaps he has studied English regularly for a few months, perhaps he studied it a long time ago or has been learning it irregularly and not very successfully. The course then takes the learner progressively through the intermediate stages of language learning by extending his ability to understand the devices of the language and how they are used in academic communication. By the final book he is expected to have developed a sophisticated awareness of the communicative

resources of English and an ability to perform a range of challenging reading tasks.

The series consists of four books. **Concepts in use** extends students' basic knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and how they are used to express fundamental concepts. It also develops their awareness of how passages are built on combinations of these concepts. **Exploring functions** deals with the use of concepts in the communicative functions of academic writing. **Discovering discourse** develops students' awareness of how the devices of language are used to express communicative function. It also shows how passages are built on combinations of simple functions. **Discourse in action** extends students' knowledge of the functional organization of written English and develops their ability to handle information found in varied types of real academic discourse. The series is designed so that the books in it can be used independently of the others in the series. Many intermediate or advanced learners may be able to begin with the third or fourth books. The whole series, however, provides a phased approach to the most challenging demands of academic discourse.

Reading and Thinking in English is therefore based on a communicative approach to reading. It assumes that efficient reading requires more than a knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical patterns, and it leads the student to an awareness of how writers structure whole passages and use the grammar and vocabulary of English to communicate. It assumes that reading comprehension can be improved only if students fully understand what they are learning and are prepared to think carefully about how the resources of a language are put to communicative use.

The course was originally developed in the Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia, by a project sponsored jointly by the British Council/Ministry of Overseas Development and the Universidad de los Andes. It was initially conceived for

university students attending formal classes but has now been extensively revised so that it can also be used for private tuition and self-study. It was tested in classes in several Colombian universities, and when used in formal classes each of the four books is designed to last one semester, so that the whole course provides learning material for a two-year period. It can be used in larger classes as well as with small groups of learners. Students working individually will need to set aside regular study times, although the material lends itself to flexible use. For both formal and informal learning situations the course has been conceived as a realistic route towards efficient and independent study through English.

## Editor's preface

This course is designed to guide students to the acquisition of strategies of reading in English which they can put to use in following their specialist studies. Although its aim is to provide for specific reading purposes, however, it does not follow the conventional practice of concentrating on how English is used in particular subject areas like Engineering, Economics and so on. Instead a selection is made of topics of more general interest and relevance to learners at this level and these topics are used to demonstrate the communicative functions of English which are common to a whole range of academic writing. The aim, then, is to establish a basic reading competence which can subsequently be brought into more specific focus as it is applied to more specialist uses of English.

Although the emphasis of the course is on how English functions in written communication of a general academic character, the authors recognize that this cannot be adequately dealt with in dissociation from the study of the formal resources of the language. Great care is taken therefore to demonstrate the communicative potential of the grammar itself and to provide practical work which will make the student aware of the functions of grammatical forms in the conveyance of meanings.

The course, then, is integrative in two senses. On the one hand it relates English for Specific Purposes with the teaching of a more general reading competence and on the other hand it shows how the effective teaching of English use must deal with the interdependence of linguistic form and communicative function without concentrating on one at the expense of the other.

H. G. Widdowson  
University of London  
Institute of Education



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The materials have been revised and extended by John Moore and Teresa Munévar in the Department of English as a Foreign Language of the University of London Institute of Education under the guidance of the Associate Editor, Professor H. G. Widdowson.

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Universidad del Valle, Cali.

## Introduction

The aim of this book is to develop students' abilities to use English in their studies. One of the most important uses made of English is in reading books and articles related to the subject or subjects which a student is studying. In order to read efficiently in English the student needs a knowledge of how the language is used in academic writing. This includes:

- a a knowledge of language itself, its grammatical structure and vocabulary
- b a knowledge of how these features of language are exploited in the presentation of information.

This book concentrates on the language used to organize information in written passages. The title of each unit refers to a particular method of organizing and presenting information. This organization is expressed by a certain number of grammatical structures and a certain kind of vocabulary. Each unit, therefore, includes:

- a reading comprehension exercises to help the student to obtain information from a passage by following the writer's method of organization
- b exercises to draw attention to the way grammar and vocabulary are used in achieving this organization.

Both types of exercise are designed to develop reading strategies which students will be able to apply to the passages they may need to read as part of their studies. The course leads students on to unsimplified passages so that they can practise how to apply these reading strategies.

Reading ability is probably best developed not in isolation but in association with the other communicative activities. There are therefore opportunities for controlled writing in each unit. The course, however, concentrates on reading for academic purposes. It is not, therefore, a course in:

- a pronunciation or everyday conversation.
- b grammar. Grammar is just one aspect of the

course, and it is introduced because of its central function in communication: not as an end in itself.

- c translation. Developing the ability to read and think in English will enable students to transfer what they read in English to their own languages.
- d specialized technical English. The language and strategies presented in this book are common to all types of academic English. Learning these will provide a basic ability which can then be applied to more specialist forms of communication.

The course requires the active participation of the student. He or she will have to practise regularly, think carefully and critically and in general accept responsibility for his or her own learning. In this way, reading ability in English can be developed in a meaningful way, as part of the whole communicative process involved in studying.



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## **Unit i   Reading as a communicative process**

### **Preview**

This unit presents some strategies to help improve reading efficiency.

The unit is in five parts. Each part deals with a particular reading strategy, as follows:

#### **Part 1**

provides practice in understanding language patterns.

#### **Part 2**

provides practice in understanding by the use of context.

#### **Part 3**

develops the ability to read with prediction.

#### **Part 4**

is concerned with purpose in reading.

#### **Part 5**

applies the reading strategies that were developed in parts 1–4 to the study of an unsimplified passage.

These strategies will be practised throughout the the book. This unit therefore introduces the method of working which will be used in all of the other units.

Part 1 UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE PATTERNS

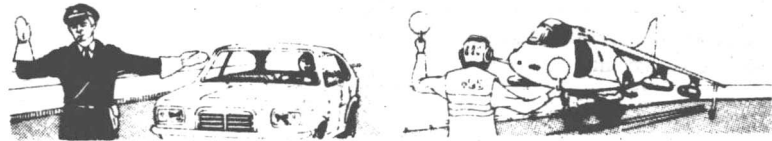
Part 1  
Understanding  
language patterns

There are different ways of communicating:

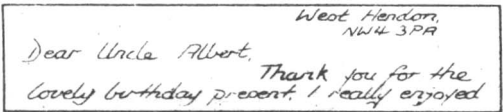
by means of visual images,



by means of actions and gestures,



by means of language.



The same message can be conveyed by different means:

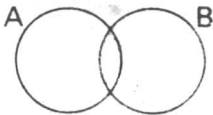


visually



and linguistically.

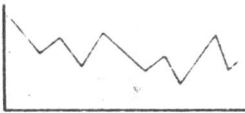
Books communicate linguistically. They also communicate non-linguistically by means of:



diagrams,



maps,

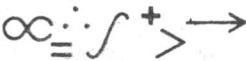


graphs,



pictures.

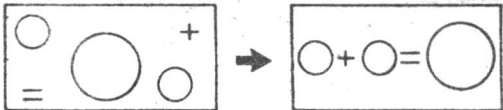
In order to understand a visual form of communication you must understand visual symbols.



Writing also uses visual symbols:

|            |          |
|------------|----------|
| contraseña | password |
| συνθημα    | 合言葉      |

In order to convey a message, visual symbols have to be grouped into patterns:



Similarly, linguistic symbols are grouped into patterns:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| l |   |
| v | o |
| c |   |

|      |
|------|
| love |
|------|

The same units can be grouped into different patterns:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| l |   |
| o | g |
| a |   |

|      |      |      |
|------|------|------|
| Olga | gaol | goal |
|------|------|------|

|      |        |
|------|--------|
| Bill | Killed |
| John |        |

|                  |
|------------------|
| John killed Bill |
| Bill killed John |

Some patterns make no sense:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| l |   |
| o | g |
| a |   |

|      |      |
|------|------|
| olag | loag |
|------|------|

|      |        |
|------|--------|
| Bill | killed |
| John |        |

|                  |
|------------------|
| Bill John killed |
| Killed Bill John |



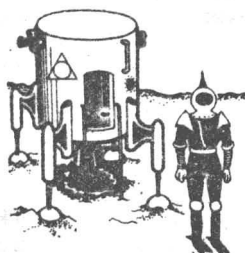
Reading requires a knowledge of how linguistic symbols combine to make words and sentences in English, and of what these words and sentences mean.

### Activity 1

#### Understanding the meanings of word and sentence patterns

Below is a description of a spaceship by somebody who said he had seen it—an eyewitness. With it there is a drawing of the spaceship. Read the eyewitness's account and write down the sections of it that do not correspond to the drawing. Then rewrite those sections so that they do correspond. Notice what changes in grammar and vocabulary you make in your corrections.

The spaceship was about two metres high. It was round at the bottom and pointed at the top. The craft was supported by three legs which were taller than the main body of the ship. I saw a small green man with two horns who had probably jumped from the ship as there was no ladder. I remember clearly a mysterious sign on the side of the craft. It showed a triangle surrounded by a circle. I am sure this is a message to people on Earth.



### Activity 2

Reading, however, does not stop at understanding word and sentence patterns. Sentences are arranged into larger patterns in order to present information in a logical way. It is possible to understand every word in a passage without understanding the message. What is wrong with the following passage?

It is well known that cats are more intelligent than dogs. For example, three out of every four motorists die of heart disease before they are fifty. Another example is the commonly observed ability of dolphins to understand human speech.<sup>1</sup> In conclusion I should like to emphasize that whereas girls learn mathematics quickly, boys learn mathematics equally quickly.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Does the final sentence contain two contrasting ideas?

<sup>1</sup> Do the examples support the generalization?

The logical structure of a passage depends on how the writer wants to present the information in it. The logical structure of a passage is often signalled by expressions which connect ideas together. These are called textual connectors. They act as signposts to help you find your way through the passage. Underline the expressions in the above passage which have this function.

We can now summarize the first strategy for improving reading. Recognize patterns of language inside the sentence and between sentences by increasing your understanding of vocabulary, grammar and textual connectors.

**Part 2**  
**Understanding**  
**by the use of**  
**context**

There are many occasions when you meet words or phrases which you do not know. A different set of strategies is needed for solving problems caused by unfamiliar words or phrases in a passage. One of these strategies is to deduce the meaning of these words or phrases by referring to the words and phrases that you do know. For example, you may find an unfamiliar word in this sentence:

The Noanamá Indians cut their canoes out of tree trunks by using an adze.

Try and draw an adze using information in the sentence. Try to complete the following statements.

An adze is a kind of ..... It can be used for ..... (therefore) it is similar to a .....

**Activity 3**

Below is a paragraph followed by a list of words from it. Try and deduce the meaning of the words in the list by reference to the grammar and connectors in the sentences in the paragraph. In each case consider which words in the context helped you, and how they helped you.

Some photographic operations, such as masking and dodging, can easily be done by the amateur. Control of the contrast of different parts of the

negative is achieved by dodging. One type of dodging is known as burning in. Burning in, the darkening of light areas, is done by using a hole in a piece of cardboard. Some parts of the negative may have to be 'held back' because they are too dark. The photographer can also decide how much of the negative to print. He may decide to print the complete negative, or, on the other hand, he may crop it.

LIST OF WORDS

|           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| dodge     | burn in |
| hold back | crop    |

There is a relation between the helpful part of the context and each word from the list. Which of the following relations helped you deduce the meaning of each word?

- a contrast
- b cause/consequence
- c general/specific
- d method/purpose
- e equivalence

We can now summarize the second strategy for improving reading. Use the information from the context to discover the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases and to help choose the appropriate meaning from the dictionary.

**Part 3**  
**Reading**  
**with prediction**

The two strategies described above will help you read more accurately and fluently. There is another technique that will help you read more fluently. This strategy is to *predict* as much as you can about what you are reading. The title of a book, article or passage tells you the topic of what you will read. Use your own knowledge of the topic to predict as much as you can about the contents.

**Activity 4**

Here are some titles. What information would you expect to find in passages with these titles?