

Jean Zukowski/Faust
Susan S. Johnston
Clark Atkinson
Elizabeth Templin

In Context

Reading Skills for Intermediate Students
of English as a Second Language



Holt-Saunders International Editions



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READING SKILLS FOR INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Jean Zukowski/Faust

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Elizabeth Templin

University of Arizona

Center for English as a Second Language

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PREFACE

In Context: Reading Skills for Intermediate Students of English as a Second Language is an intermediate reading skills textbook for the ESL (English as a Second Language) student whose goal is attending an English-speaking university.

The book is intended for the intermediate level. The student who is familiar with the basic structures of English can benefit from *In Context*. Because this text focuses on the reading process as mastering a series of skills, the book is different from most ESL reading books. First the student is asked to anticipate what the unit will contain, using his or her own knowledge of the world to predict the concepts that will be involved. Then the vocabulary of the unit is presented in a controlled-context environment to familiarize the student with the words that he or she is not likely to know in English.

The units have been developed with this purpose: to form logical sets of words, members of the same linguistic domain, that can then be used in a base article on the general topic and in additional high-interest readings in which the words and concepts are reinforced. Following each main article, there are exercises that focus on other reading skills, such as skimming and scanning, extracting main ideas, making inferences, figuring out word meanings from contexts, and understanding sequences. The student becomes familiar with the strategies in the Preliminary Unit. The ten remaining units provide the opportunity to practice these skills.

In Context uses vocabulary that might seem to be difficult for the intermediate student. Yet quite the opposite has been found to be true in use at the Center for English as a Second Language at the University of Arizona. Because the college-bound student expects—out of his or her own experience—that specific concepts will appear as part of each unit, the readings are as easy to read as basic readings with fewer “hard words.” Furthermore, several standards have been used throughout the text that make the readings easier than first glance might assess.

1. Paragraphs have clear topic sentences and identifiable main ideas.
2. Sentence length has been limited. In order to control the concept load (and, therefore, minimize the strain on the student's short-term memory), we have limited sentences to an average of from twelve to fifteen words. The only instances of longer sentences are those in which an introductory element is clearly marked or those in which a series of items is presented at either the beginning or the end of a sentence.

3. Signal words have been included. Nearly all the subordinated clauses are signaled with a *that* or other clause-forming word to alert the student that a support structure follows. In many cases, the word *both* is used to indicate to the student that a compound noun, verb, or phrase is coming. *Either* and *neither* are likewise used to warn the student of choices. Marks of punctuation, such as commas, colons, and dashes, have been incorporated so that the student can be aware of the different kinds of contextualized information. Punctuation has been used to incorporate more information into a sentence wherever the authors believed that a longer sentence was preferable to two shorter less integrated sentences.
4. Vocabulary has been “respiraled.” There are some words that are introduced in nonessential situations, then used in Vocabulary in Context exercises, and used again and again in main and related readings. Most new items of one lesson are used in subsequent lessons. The readings are built on one another, so the reading difficulty level remains constant for the student although the book appears to become more difficult.

In Context presents ESL students with reading topics such as communication, cultural survival, marketing, and mobility. There are articles about new technology such as Qube (talk-back television) and about new practices of ancient ideas such as modern suggestion therapy. The focus on skills will also help the students learn to be better readers.

A separate section called “Instructions for Use” explains some strategies for teaching the lessons and explains the rationale.

An *Instructor's Manual* is available. The Manual may be obtained through a local Holt representative or by writing to the English Editor, College Department, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 383 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

In Context is a book of readings for reading skills development. Traditionally, the teaching of reading—in ESL especially—has focused on vocabulary development and comprehension; the assumption has been that if a person understands the words and the structures of a sentence, that student will understand the message: the “story” and what it means. Therefore, because of the differences in the approach to reading in *In Context*, some instructors might find this text a new experience. From psycholinguistics we have learned that there is much more to the reading process than just the words and structures: The reading process involves the process of thinking, its connections with native language, the thought patterns of other languages, and the development of critical thought. As instructors of reading, we must lead our students into the development of reading skills. Surveying, scanning for organization, skimming for details, extracting main ideas, making inferences, using context clues to figure out word meanings, making judgments, understanding sequences, and drawing conclusions are skills learned through focus and practice. These skills are not inherent in word meaning alone. They must be taught and assimilated gradually in order to become a part of the total reading process.

Because of the skills focus in *In Context*, some of the exercises might seem different in that the instructor might want guidance in how to approach them. In general, the lessons all follow a pattern, and each exercise practices one main skill.

THE GENERAL SCHEME OF A LESSON

1. The lesson is introduced with a prereading anticipation exercise. This can be done by the student as homework or by the class as a group. In the beginning lessons, it would be better to help the students learn to anticipate by doing the exercise in class. The emphasis is that the students—as intelligent human beings—bring a knowledge of the world with them to the ESL classroom; anticipation exercises invite the students to think of reading as an active rather than a passive endeavor.

2. The second step is the presentation of focus vocabulary items. These vocabulary items are key words that are essential to understanding the base reading. *Vocabulary in Context* exercises have built-in redundancies that are very obvious at first; the student is drawn by these repetitions into looking for

clues to the meaning of a word rather than automatically reaching for a dictionary.

3. The main reading follows next. This reading is a general essay on the unit topic. Usually, the base reading contains the vocabulary items that have just been introduced in minicontexts (the *Vocabulary in Context* exercise).

4. The True-False questions, which involve reading quickly looking for details, form the first of a set of exercises based on the main reading. The students can be encouraged to skim (to run their eyes quickly over the pages of the reading) if the instructor requires that the number of the paragraph that verifies the answer is noted along with the true or false. It is important that the students take this part of the reading skills development seriously: training the eye to move quickly in left-to-right sweeps is especially important to those students whose first reading language is not written left-to-right. Instructors need to be aware of the students' temptation to answer the questions from knowledge rather than by skimming to verify the information. Students often need encouragement before they will practice this skill.

5. Traditional comprehension questions follow the skimming exercise; it is important that the students understand the general information of a reading.

6. The next focus is on main ideas. In this exercise, the student is asked to consider the entire paragraph, the purpose of it, and the synthesized meaning of all the sentences. Some of the questions might seem to have more than one answer; this should be acceptable to the instructor because the same body of information might say different things to different people. The purpose is to direct the student's thinking to what the reading is about—not just to have a “right” answer. The secondary purpose is to teach the student to think in terms of what the author of a reading intended the message to be. Thus, focusing on main ideas is a thinking skill as well as a reading skill.

7. Drawing conclusions and making inferences make up another thinking skill; the exercises are arranged so that the student must use logic to decide whether there is enough information to make the inference, and then the student must decide whether the conclusion can be made or not. All people will not agree on all of the answers; again, however, the goal of the exercise is not just to get a list of right answers, but to draw the students into thinking and talking in English about English words in English sentences expressing English thoughts “Englishly.” The class discussion, therefore, of “wrong” answers is just as valuable to the total approach as a list of “perfect” answers, if not even more valuable.

After these initial seven components, the units have related readings, timed readings, word study exercises, sequencing exercises, and practice with specialized reading types. In general, there are two-to-four additional readings in each unit. Each reading encourages reading skill practice.

The Preliminary Unit to *In Context* presents the format of skills and the reading vocabulary to the students and teachers. The material in the first unit deals mostly with the process of reading as a group of interrelated skills. Vo-

cabulary items that may be new to the students, such as skimming and scanning, inference, and context, are defined and explained within the readings and exercises. Some classes might not need to learn these skills or specialized vocabulary words in such a simple way; the teacher might choose to use the material in the Preliminary Unit as review material or homework assignments later in the course. If the instructor elects to begin with the content lessons (in Unit 1), then the students might need more guidance from the instructor in doing the exercises at first. However, because reading informative articles is much more appealing than learning the skills in miniature reading samples, the instructor might decide to begin with "Communication," Unit 1. If a class needs to be led through the learning of reading skills in the Preliminary Unit, the instructor will probably find that doing this unit as an introduction in class time gives the best results.

Students whose first reading language is not English need to be aware of the students' temptation to answer the questions from knowledge rather than by skimming to verify the information. Students often need encouragement before they will practice this skill.

2. Traditional comprehension questions follow the skimming exercise. It is important that the students understand the general information of a reading.

3. The next focus is on main ideas. In this exercise, the student is asked to consider the entire paragraph, the purpose of it, and the synthesized meaning of all the sentences. Some of the questions might seem to have more than one answer; this should be acceptable to the instructor because the same body of information might say different things to different people. The purpose is to direct the student's thinking to what the reading is about—not just to have a "right" answer. The secondary purpose is to teach the student to think in terms of what the author of a reading intended the message to be. This is a reading skill as well as a thinking skill.

4. Drawing conclusions and making inferences make up another thinking skill; the exercises are arranged so that the student must use logic to decide whether there is enough information to make the inference, and then the student must decide whether the conclusion can be made or not. All people will not agree on all of the answers; again, however, the goal of the exercise is not just to get a list of right answers, but to draw the students into thinking and talking in English about English words in English sentences expressing English thoughts. The class discussion, therefore, of "wrong" answers is just as valuable to the total approach as a list of "perfect" answers, and even more valuable.

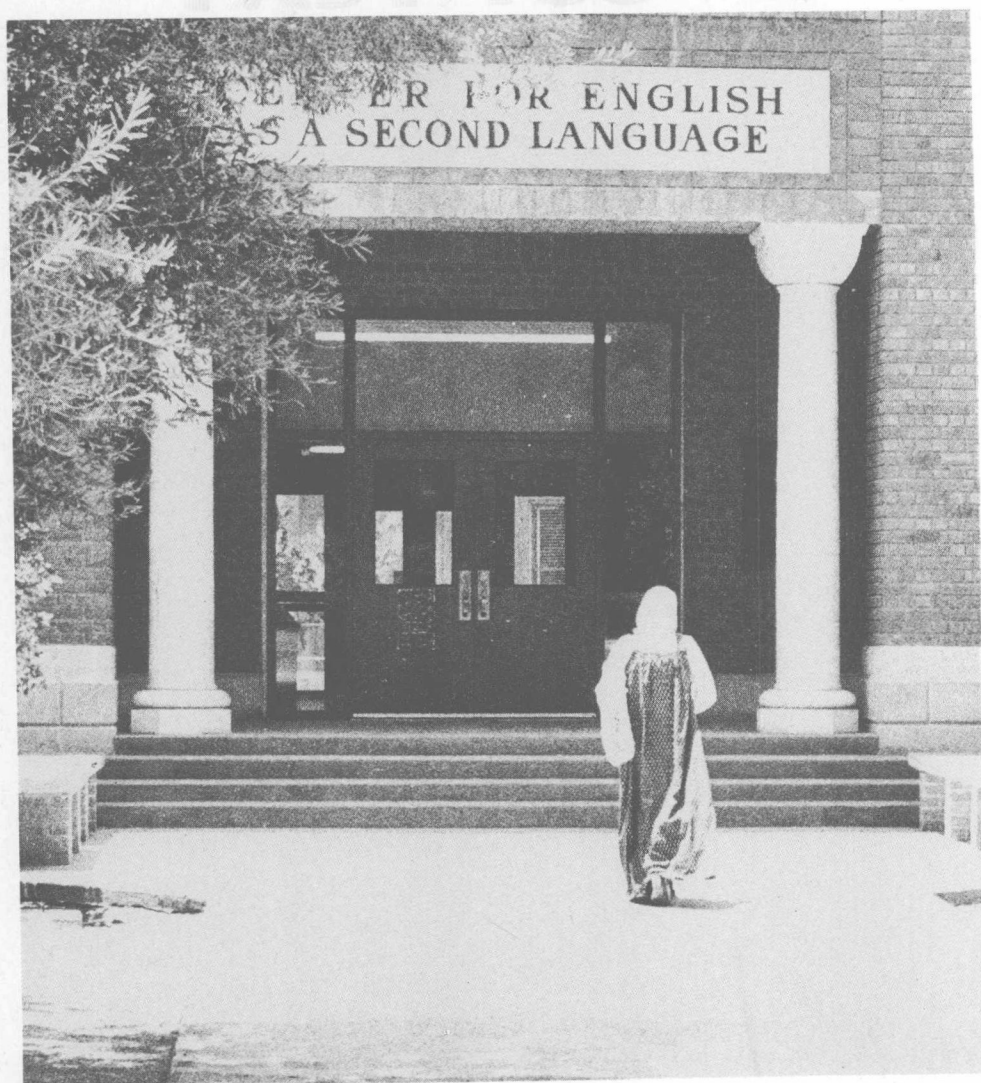
After these initial seven components, the units have related readings, timed readings, word study exercises, sequencing exercises, and practice with specialized reading types. In general, there are two to four additional readings in each unit. Each reading encourages reading skill practice.

The Preliminary Unit in Context presents the format of skills and the reading vocabulary to the students and teachers. The material in the first unit deals mostly with the process of reading as a group of unrelated skills. Vo-

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PRELIMINARY UNIT

LEARNING SKILLS FOR READING

As you learn English, you learn many words and new structures. You learn to pronounce the English words and to understand them in their written forms. However, there is more than this to the process of learning to read. Reading in a second language means learning to use a new set of skills. These skills may be similar to ones that you learned in your first language. In this book you will practice many of the reading skills that you will need to read English quickly and well. This introduction will help you learn to do the exercises in this book.

ANTICIPATION: Practice with using your experience to predict

Anticipation and *to anticipate* may be the first words that you learn in this book. *To anticipate* means to think about what might happen before it happens, to expect a result. *Anticipation* is the noun form of the word. It means using your own experience so that you can guess about a topic.

EXAMPLE: This unit is "Learning Skills for Reading." What information does the title give you? You have learned to read before; you already know how to read in your own language and in English, too. Stop and think for a moment about these questions:

What are some reading skills?

What reading skills do you already know?

What reading skills is this book likely to teach?

Do you have answers to these questions? Your answers show that you can anticipate the ideas of the lesson. Because you know what to expect, it will be easier for you to improve your reading.

In this book, each unit will begin with a section called *Anticipation*—which is one important reading skill. The next section will be *Vocabulary in Context*. (*Vocabulary* means words, and *context* means a situation—the other words and meanings that are around a word.) The important new words of a unit appear in sentences or short paragraphs. These contexts are written to help you learn to find new meanings. You will find several different kinds of clues or hints for the meanings of new words.

2 LEARNING SKILLS FOR READING

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT: Practice with figuring out word meanings to save time in reading

The word context is probably a new one for you. Because it is an important word in this book, you need to understand it and be able to use it. Here is an example of how the word context would be introduced in a Vocabulary in Context item.

EXAMPLE: A single word might actually have two different meanings. A reader chooses the correct meaning from the situation of the sentence. The word lead, for example, can mean to take someone by the hand and help that person toward a goal. Lead is also the name of a very heavy silver-colored metal (Pb). The context helps the reader choose the appropriate meaning.

A context is . . .

- a. a word.
- b. a sentence situation.
- c. a different meaning.
- d. a reader's choice.

The other sentences in the paragraph helped you to find the meaning. You actually used the context to guess at the meaning of the word.

Now decide which meaning of lead is meant in each of these contexts. What are the clues from the context that help you to decide?

1. In the circus, the clowns lead the children in a parade.
2. The lead in the bottle cap was soft and easy to bend.

When you read in your language, you often read words that are new to you. Do you look up all new words in a dictionary? Probably not. First, you try to guess the meaning of the word. Often, because of the other words around the new word, you can get an idea of the meaning of the new word. This meaning is usually good enough for you to be able to continue reading with understanding. Remember that if a writer has used a word once, he or she probably has used it again—especially if the word is an important one in the writing. It is a good idea to read further—even though you do not know one word—because the meaning might be clearer in a few sentences. If the word is a very important word in the reading and you cannot figure it out from the context, then you can look it up in a dictionary. However, it is better to learn to figure out word meanings without a dictionary. You will save time and learn to be a better reader.

You can learn several ways that will help you to guess the meanings of words. These are clues, ideas to help you.

Clue

Look for the verb to be. It is easy to find a meaning for a new word when the definition is clearly given. This usually happens with the verb to be.

EXAMPLE: A skill is an ability to perform an act (to do something) or to make something well. For example, learning to read quickly is a skill. A person can learn to become an expert by practicing special techniques.

These sentences actually define the word skill. Is acts as an equal sign (=).

PRACTICE: Find the meanings of the underlined words.

1. To predict is to guess about the future. A prediction about the result of a soccer game is saying which team is more likely to win before the game starts.

To predict is to _____.

2. A newspaper is a collection of articles. Each article is a report on a topic that people will be interested in reading about.

An article is _____.

3. The driver wanted to check the car before buying it. To test a car properly is to try it out first and to have an expert check it. After the driver tested it, he decided to buy it.

To test is to _____.

Sometimes the opposite meaning is given with a *be* verb and a *not* word (like *not*, *neither*, *nor*, *never*, or *hardly*).

EXAMPLE: Although the two books are *similar*, they are not quite the same. One is slightly older, and the newer one is a little longer. In any case, they are nearly alike.

Similar things are _____.

Clue

Look for clause markers. A clause might give the meaning (or clues to the meaning) of a noun. Words such as *which*, *that*, *whose*, *who*, (*whom*), and *where* can begin a clause. You can use the information that follows *which*, *that*, *whose*, *who*, or *where* to help you to find the meaning.