

INTERMEDIATE LANGUAGE SKILLS

READING

Frank Heyworth



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READING Language Skills Intermediate

Frank Heyworth

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**Intermediate
Language Skills
READING**

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Foreword

Intermediate Language Skills: Reading is the fifteenth book for language learners and teachers produced by teachers and materials writers from the Foundation for European Language and Educational Centres. Some have been designed for teachers' use, others for direct classroom use by students, but all have attempted innovative approaches. This reading skills book is no exception, and is directed to the new generation of language learners who want to go beyond acquisition of a system of structures to the development of strategies for processing and using language communicatively. It is innovative in the way it puts reading activity firmly in a communicative context and in the encouragement it gives to students to use their intelligence and creativity in the reading process. It was developed in Iran for use with students in urgent need of study skills, but we think its approach is one that can provide more general relevance and even serve as a model for intelligent and lively learning of language skills.

E. J. C. Waespi
Director, Eurocentres

Notes for the teacher

What this book sets out to do
To develop students' skills in reading
The book does not set out to provide a system of structures to be acquired, but rather to provide a system of strategies for processing and using language communicatively. It is innovative in the way it puts reading activity firmly in a communicative context and in the encouragement it gives to students to use their intelligence and creativity in the reading process. It was developed in Iran for use with students in urgent need of study skills, but we think its approach is one that can provide more general relevance and even serve as a model for intelligent and lively learning of language skills.

The activities proposed in this book are designed to lead students to an awareness of their skills and some part of the way to being able to use them well. Each part except Unit 1 and 12, which are short, contains a set of activities which are intended to lead the student to systematically improve the skills involved in reading.

Section One: Introduction
Here the reading situation is described, with the reader in the context and setting in which he is reading. The student is introduced to the moment of reading, outside the classroom, it is very seldom that

Notes for the teacher

What this book sets out to do

To develop students' skills as readers. This means developing their ability to *understand, interpret, process, and use* what is contained in reading matter and in the diagrams and illustrations that accompany it.

The book does *not* use reading texts as a way of teaching grammar and structures or as a pretext for drills or exercises on general grammar and lexis.

In order to read effectively it is necessary:

- to be aware of the nature of what you are reading, i.e. to distinguish between different types of text.
- to be aware of the purpose you have in reading – to pass the time in a train, to study for an exam, to find out at what time your train is leaving, to support your point of view in an argument, to pick out information for a particular purpose, to satisfy curiosity, to assess a proposal . . .
- to decide on a reading approach or strategy suitable for your purpose.
- to be able to use different reading strategies – close reading, skimming, scanning, memorising . . .
- to be able to understand the different ways used to link the different parts of a text to each other to give cohesion and coherence to the text.
- to be able to select and process the information so that it is in a form usable for your purposes – notes, a diagram, sketches, or some other form of speech and writing.

The activities proposed in *Intermediate Language Skills: Reading* are designed to lead students to an awareness of these skills and some part of the way to being able to use them well.

Each unit except units 9 and 14, which are applications of earlier work, consists of *seven parts* which are intended to let the student go systematically through the basic activities involved in reading.

Section One: Situation

Here the reading situation is described – who the reader is, the context and setting in which he is reading, his attitudes and intentions at the moment of reading; outside the classroom it is very seldom that

anyone reads without a precise reason or at least setting. In order to reproduce this situation in the lesson the student is asked to play the role of someone who would need to deal with the reading passage for a real purpose. Section One provides an opportunity for students to discuss the *purpose* of their reading, and to talk about the *strategy* they would use to approach it.

Section Two: Think it over

Again in 'real' reading it is very rare to start reading something without more or less clear ideas about what one expects to find in the passage. Indeed many forms of reading involve a sort of internal dialogue between reader and text, where the reader compares the content of the passage with his own previous knowledge and opinions and decides whether to accept or reject it. One of the skills of rapid reading is the ability to predict what is going to come next, and a source of this is one's predictions about the content. (Another source is of course knowledge of the grammar of written English and its signalling devices.) In Section Two students can talk over in general what they know and think about the subject in question so that they come to it prepared in the way they would be in native language reading and therefore prepared to enter a dialogue with it.

Section Three: Text

Here the text is reproduced – if possible in its original form and presentation. All the texts are authentic with some occasional slight condensation in order to present a coherent piece of language. They have been chosen mainly from newspaper and magazine sources and are concerned with contemporary life and society. No literary texts have been used. An attempt has been used to provide texts from international rather than purely British sources, and there are passages from American, Indian and European books, newspapers and magazines. At the end of each text is a question requiring students to identify the text type – popular or learned, newspaper or book . . .

Section Four: Language work

This section is printed opposite the text and contains work on the vocabulary and structures necessary to understand the text. The emphasis is on activities which allow students to develop skills – like how to guess the meaning of an unknown word from its context or form, or the general uses of reference in written English – enabling them to deal with other texts outside the classroom with a greater chance of success. In some units this section contains work on interpreting the writer's attitude towards the subject and some of the ways in which this is signalled to the reader. The exercises aim to help the student to understand the text as he goes along by asking explicitly the kind of questions he will ask himself in out-of-class reading. It tries to establish a *dialogue* between student and text.

Section Five: Overall understanding

The activities proposed in Section Five treat the passage as a whole – whereas Section Four is word and sentence based. It refers back to the work of Sections One and Two in which reading purpose and expectations have been discussed and examines how the information in the passage can be processed and transformed to meet the aims we have defined before reading. It relates the action of reading back to reader, setting and purpose.

Section Six: Using your reading

This section reinforces the major aim of the book – to deal with reading as a purposeful activity – by relating to a task which requires the *use* of the information acquired during the reading. This can be in the form of a discussion, or talk to be prepared, or a role play to be carried out, or in some units, written work – making lecture notes, producing a sketch or plan of action. The role situation introduced in Section One is the setting for the *communicative task* which is set.

Section Seven: Summary

Each unit closes with a summary of the reading skills covered in the preceding work and can serve as a reference point for both teacher and students while working through the book and once the course is complete.

Using the book

It is recommended that you allow three teaching hours for each unit of the book:

Session One for dealing with setting up the situation, talking through it, defining the reading strategy and approach, talking about the type of text and reading through the passage.

Session Two for dealing with the language work and overall understanding.

Session Three for preparing and carrying out the task in Section Six *Using Your Reading*.

Teachers will clearly want to integrate *pair* and *group work* into the reading lesson, and the discussion elements in Session One, the work on overall understanding in Lesson Two and the preparation for the task are well suited to this. If there is a guided or self-study element to the course it should also be possible for students to attempt the second session independently.

Other teaching methods which have been found to work when the material was being tested are:

Setting time limits for skimming and scanning exercises.

Putting *skeleton outlines* of the text on an overhead projector transparency and giving students a time limit for filling in the details in note form.

Dividing the class into two groups one of which reads the passage while the other, without looking at the passage, prepares questions to elicit the content. The two halves of the class can then be mixed up to give the questions and answers – this to be followed by close reading to see whether the *information gap* has been successfully filled. It is probably best if both sides are given a role identity in this activity in order to maintain the idea of purposeful reading.

Throughout the book, reading is treated as an intelligent activity and teachers are advised to spend time discussing the *whys* and *hows* of reading with their students. The students' notes on page x immediately before the first reading passage are intended as an introduction to get students thinking about what they are learning.

To the student

The reading activities in this book are designed to help you improve your reading in English. Reading used to be considered the passive part of learning a language, but in this book we try to involve you actively in the process.

To read well you need first to decide on your reading purpose – *why* you are reading a particular passage – for information, enjoyment, making plans, confirming your opinions . . .

Next you must decide on *how* you are going to read it – your reading *approach* or *strategy* – quickly, carefully, to remember all the information or to select just the small part you want . . .

Reading is a kind of dialogue between the reader and the writer – he adds to what you already know or changes your opinion or knowledge about a question. Therefore it's useful to discuss what you know already.

During your reading you need to develop some *skills* – how to guess the meanings of words from their context; how to recognise the links between the different parts of the passage; how to separate the facts from the opinions . . .

The exercises in the book try to give you practice in doing the things you need to do to be a good reader. Of course, in reality, *you* decide *what* you are going to read and *why* you are going to read it, but this cannot be included in the book. So each unit of the book has a first section called *situation* in which you are asked to imagine you are a particular person and to decide *why* and *how* he or she would read the passage. This is to provide a context like the one you will do your own reading in. The situation is repeated in the last section of each unit where you are asked to perform a task in which you use and apply what you have read.

Frank Heyworth
September 1981

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Interpol

Situation



WHAT IS YOUR READING PURPOSE?

In all of these units you are going to work on reading with a purpose. The description of the situation will allow you to decide on your approach to the reading passage. In this unit you are a programme researcher and you see the title *What is International Crime?*

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO READ?

- read the article quickly noting every fact
- ‘skim’ – read quickly to get the main points
- ‘scan’ – glance at quickly looking for specific information
- read in a relaxed way to pass the time.

Use the reading approach you have decided on to read the article. If you decide to scan or skim, read the advice on this on page 5.

You have a job as a programme researcher in the drama and series department of OTV, a commercial television company. Your boss, the producer Harry Gregg, wants to get away from the usual series of detective stories or films about police or gangsters in London or New York:

‘What I want is a story about *real* people with a *real* background: you know, based on things that really happen. And I’d like to get a new setting, like Africa or India, instead of staying in Britain or the States. Now you go and find me something about the problems of crime in Lagos or Delhi or Singapore. I’d like you to come back with ideas for a series of documentary adventures – with human interest, not sensational violence.’

During your researches you found this article in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* . . .

Think it over

You made notes on your talk with Harry Gregg:

find information about . . .
background must be . . .
look for stories with . . .

What do you know about Interpol? What does the name suggest about its activities? What kind of crimes would you expect an international police force to deal with?

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ALREADY?

What is international crime?

1973 was the year of Interpol's fiftieth anniversary, and today it continues to develop and expand, currently with a hundred and twenty-four member countries, including India.

A policeman's first reaction when he hears something described as a crime is to find out whether the law has been broken. Where there is no law, there can be no crimes—only anti-social behaviour or offences against moral and religious standards. The first question, therefore, is: Are there any international crimes, legally speaking? And the answer is No—for several reasons.

In the first place there is no international penal code or body of international law defining international crimes or offences. Secondly, national penal codes are only valid within a particular country. Efforts have been made to have certain activities universally recognised as criminal. The fact remains that there are no international laws listing or defining international crime. How then, you may ask, is it possible to have an international police force? It has been accepted by the countries affiliated to Interpol that any criminal activity which has an international bearing, either in itself or because of the character of the offender, should be considered an international crime.

This can be illustrated by a recent case in India. A British national, posing as a correspondent of a leading British daily, came to India. He evinced considerable interest in the jewellery markets of Delhi and seemed intent on buying large quantities of expensive jewellery.

One shopkeeper, keen to sell his wares, obligingly made a deal with him for 22,000 rupees; the only difficulty was the mode of payment. The foreigner issued two cheques drawn on the Bangkok branch of the Bank of America, which the shopkeeper accepted, impressed by the customer's prosperous ways. The foreigner had, however, issued fake cheques and he lost no time in leaving the country with his precious possession.

The cheques bounced. The shopkeeper went to the local police. Interpol, Delhi, on request from the local police, promptly got in touch with Interpol, London, and learnt that the international swindler had been arrested there, convicted and sentenced to two years' imprisonment for theft as well as for issuing worthless cheques.

It came to light that he had twenty-seven convictions for similar offences. Interpol asked Britain to extradite him and he was brought to Delhi and sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment and fined 2000 rupees.

Language work

A Vocabulary in context

How can we find out the meanings of words we don't know without having to look at a dictionary each time? One way is through looking at the context of the word, assessing all the information you know from the words you do understand. For example, you may not know the meaning of the word 'swindler' in line 67; but you do know that it is used to describe the man in the story who is a criminal – so you can guess that it is probably another word for a kind of criminal. You can even be more specific: what kind of criminal is he? Not a murderer or a train robber, but someone who cheats or tricks people. And this is what a swindler is – a kind of criminal who cheats people.

Try to guess the meanings of the following words using the context to help you:

- 1 *valid* (line 24) – think of the meaning of the whole sentence – *valid* can be guessed from this.
- 2 *affiliated* (line 34) – think of '124 member countries'. If you're affiliated to an organisation you're a ... of it.
- 3 *posing* (line 42) – is the man really a journalist? No, he is ... to be one.
- 4 *evinced* (line 44) – what other word could fit into 'he ... interest'?
- 5 *wares* (line 50) – what do shopkeepers do? They sell ...
- 6 *fake* (line 59) – do you think the cheques were genuine, real ones?
- 7 *bounced* (line 62) – did the shopkeeper receive payment on the cheques? No, they ...
- 8 *extradite* (line 75) – the British authorities sent him out of the country to India, so ...
- 9 *rigorous* (line 77) – will prison be a pleasant experience?

B Vocabulary building

A second way of working out what words probably mean is to think of the form of the word to see if it reminds you of other words you know. *Penal* in line 20 is probably new to you but you will probably be able to connect it with *penalty* and guess that *penal code* is a system which sets out which activities are against the law and will be punished.

Even if you didn't know the word *anti-social*, you will be able to work out the meaning from the prefix *anti-*, meaning *against*, and *social* you will link with *society* to get the sense of 'anti-social' as an adjective describing actions against society.

Try the same technique on the following words (if you don't already know them):

- 1 *universally* (line 26) means ... linked to ...
- 2 *intent* (line 46) means ... linked to ...
- 3 *imprisonment* (lines 69–70) means ... linked to ...
- 4 *worthless* (line 71) means ... links ... and ...

C Comprehension

- 1 What do you expect to learn from the article after you have read the title?
- 2 The text gives two definitions of crime – one for ordinary people, and one for policemen: Ordinary people consider a crime is ... while for policemen the definition of a crime is ... Why is the policeman's meaning different?
- 3 What difficulty for the activities of an international police force is raised in lines 19–30?
- 4 What are the reasons for this difficulty?
- 5 How is this difficulty overcome by Interpol? Member countries have agreed that ...
- 6 This can be illustrated by a recent case in India – what does this mean? (lines 40–1)
- 7 This is the story of a crime:
 - a) Who was the criminal?
 - b) What did he do?
 - c) Who did he pretend to be?
 - d) Why did the shopkeeper accept the cheques?
 - e) How did Interpol help?
 - f) What punishment did the criminal receive?

General question

How does the story help the reader to understand the question asked in the title of the text? It is an example of how ...

Overall understanding

- 1 Do you think the author of the text is: (a) a journalist? (b) a lawyer? (c) a policeman? (d) a criminal? Explain your choice.

- 2 Is the text meant for the general public or for specialists?
- 3 As a programme researcher, which parts of the text would you find most interesting – the details about the way Interpol works, or the story about the criminal? Or both? Or neither?
- 4 As a programme researcher you would obviously want to take some notes on the passage – but only of the things you feel would be of use to you for the job you have been given. These would probably be of two kinds: (a) background information about Interpol and how it works (b) ideas for the story.

Remember that in note form you do not need to put in the articles or the full forms of verbs. Instead of *A confidence trickster was caught with the help of Interpol information about his previous crime* you can put *trickster caught by Interpol info on former crimes*.

Choose what you would note down from the article and write it in note form.

- 5 Somebody sees you reading the article and says, *What's that you're reading?* Give a brief answer – *Oh, it's about how . . . This is illustrated by a story about . . .*

NOTES ON INTERPOL ARTICLE

Background Information:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Story details:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Using your reading

The article gave you an idea for a TV series. Write a note to your boss explaining it. One possibility – a series using the background of Interpol in India – say why it would be interesting, who the main characters in the story could be, where the story would take place; give some ideas for further adventures. Another possibility – a series about international criminals and swindlers, what they do, how they work, the harmful effects of their crimes; give ideas for other stories.

You could begin: *I think we could do a story about Interpol in India. (Why? Background . . . Characters . . . Setting . . .)*

How to scan

Scanning is a reading skill you use when you want to check quickly whether a text you are reading contains information you need. Here are some tips on how to do it:

- 1 Think of some key words connected with the information you need – look quickly down the page to see if you can spot any of them. If you do, read the sentences around them to check if it's what you need.
- 2 Look for chapter headings/paragraph headings – words in bold type/words underlined. They give you a lot of quick information about the contents of reading matter.
- 3 If it's in a book, look at the list of contents and the indexes.

You can use the same techniques to *skim*, that is, to read something quickly to get the main points.

To practise these skills try giving yourself a very short time (say 30 seconds) to look at a page and see how much of the most important meaning you can get.

Summary

In this unit you have worked on selecting relevant details from an article; on how to guess the probable meanings of words from their context or from their form. You have seen how examples can be used to illustrate a general point.

2 About Chinese

Situation

Stieg, Maria and Chantal are all studying English in Britain. One day in the coffee-break they had a discussion about learning languages and about which languages were the most difficult to learn:

STIEG: I think French is the hardest language I know – all the rules about agreements of adjectives and participles.

CHANTAL: It's not nearly as difficult as German. Have you ever looked at a German grammar? It's frightening.

MARIA: Anyway, all European languages must be easy compared to Chinese.

Think of learning thousands of different characters all written the wrong way round. It would take years even to begin to read properly.

STIEG: I'm not sure, you know. They say Chinese grammar is very simple, and the writing's a system of pictures. Once you know how the system works it would be easy.

CHANTAL: I don't think you're right about the writing. It used to be pictures but now it's much more complicated, and the writing goes from top to bottom . . .

In fact none of them really knew much about Chinese; as they were near the school library they went in and found a book called *About Chinese* . . .

今晚係唐餐定係

張張屋我怕要條
先太有怕熨褲
生太冷我吓唔

WHAT IS YOUR READING PURPOSE?

Note any questions you would like to get answers to by reading the passage. Do you want to know *everything* about Chinese? Do you need to memorise what you learn? How will you approach your reading task?

- close reading to understand all the details?
- skimming to get the general meaning of the passage?
- scanning to pick out particular points?

Think it over

What do you think about the students' discussion? Who do you think was right about Chinese writing? How much do you *know* about Chinese? What would you expect to be the difficulties involved in learning it?

What exactly is the information the three students want to find out from the book about Chinese?

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ALREADY?

Text

In your first reading of this passage try to scan to see if it contains some of the information you are looking for. In one minute look through quickly to see if any key words appear about the way in which Chinese people write – these words could include *direction*, *left to right*, *backwards* . . . note in which paragraphs you find them.

Chinese Script

A common belief about Chinese characters is that they are pictures written down back to front. This is quite wrong. But it may be useful to examine the separate parts of this belief in order to clarify what Chinese script really is, and to show that, although Chinese writing is difficult, there are certain lines of approach open to us.

In the first place, the system of Chinese writing has at least five separate elements. Picture writing may be involved in all of these, just as *sound-painting* is involved in some words in most European languages. But to say that Chinese characters are all drawings of things is like saying that all English words are like *cuckoo* or *splash*. Very few characters today can still be seen as pictures.

Secondly, taking *written down back to front* to refer to the direction followed when writing a Chinese sentence, there is no absolute rule on this point. For the last decade, Peking has wisely imposed *left to right* as the form for both handwriting and printing. Elsewhere, and even in China among older people, the most usual handwriting direction is in downward columns, starting from the right margin.

Thirdly, it is incorrect to say that the individual character is written backwards, that is, right to left in order of making the pen strokes. Left to right is the rule for most letters.

The notion of characters as pictures does, however, give an historical starting point from which to approach the five different types of Chinese characters. Certainly the earliest characters were pictures. Their first appearance in about 1400 B. C. shows a high proportion of recognisable drawings: ☉ for sun (now 日), ☾ for moon (now 月). But even at this early date it was impossible to express everything by pictures and to represent ideas and concepts symbolism began to be used.

From pp. 34–5, *About Chinese*, by Robert Newnham, published by Penguin Books Ltd.