

Students are essentially involved in 2 types of reading, *intensive* (for class/study purposes) and *extensive* (outside the classroom/for pleasure), c.f. *casual* and *focussed* listening. Whatever type of reading is the case students can be taught a number of specific reading skills :-

(1) PREDICTION - this simply involves reading a text, usually a story, which is incomplete. Students then have to predict what comes next. Such an exercise will provide the necessary motivation to engage the individual(s) in the *active process of reading*.

(2) SKIMMING - skimming means reading for gist/general understanding. As such skimming activities could typically include the following:-

2.1 skim reading a series of short newspaper articles in order to match them with suitable headlines. This could be a multiple choice type activity with suitable distractor headlines mixed in with the actual ones

2.2 reading a series of short paragraphs and then writing a summary of each

(3) SCANNING - scanning means searching/scanning a text for specific information. Typical scanning exercises may include the following :-

3.1 reading a text and then answering a series of questions.

3.2 completing a crossword puzzle based on a reading text.

Skimming and scanning are very important reading sub-skills. As a result, the vast majority of exercises relate to them. As native speakers most people will skim-read to see if an article is of any interest, or if they are pushed for time. If a particular story grabs our attention we then switch to scanning skills.

(4) DEDUCTION - this means guessing the meaning of a word from the context of its sentence and/or paragraph. It can also involve guessing what the missing word or phrase could be in a standard cloze passage. Typical exercises are as follows :-

4.1 guessing the meaning of a series of nonsense words, based on their position in a given structure. This is also referred to as *inference*.

4.2 working out the missing parts of a cloze passage by examining all the existing language, as described above.

Deduction, in particular *inference*, is a skill that we all use when we come across new vocabulary, e.g. during our *extensive* reading when we are looking through a newspaper or reading a novel. We recognise the fact that reaching for the dictionary will destroy the pleasure of reading. However, as native speakers of English, we carry that extra knowledge which allows us to guess the meaning quite accurately. As such, we can simply absorb such words into the recognisable stream of text in front of us. Students should be encouraged to cultivate this skill rather than simply reaching for the dictionary.

The above 4 reading skills constitute the main skills taught via EFL material. However, there are many other skills which are important, in particular to students that have a more advanced level of reading to begin with. [These will be covered on the next handout.]