

# READING A PRIMARY OCCURRENCE IN COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE

*Alma Breshani, Msc.*

Department of Foreign Languages University of Vlora, Albania

---

## Abstract

Reading & understanding a text means being able to spot the ideas in it; to understand the given knowledge in order to compare them with the previous ones; to imply; to notice what is important, to split the known from the unknown in order to make use of ones knowledge. Readability is on the same rank with usability. Lexical knowledge and background make up two of the most essential elements that define the readability of a text.

Precise reading, different techniques to ease its understanding has continuously changed especially in these years when its understanding is measured through testing. Reading comprehension development phases from analyses to synthesis enable you to deepen its study. In the long run, this study passed from a simple reading without defining objective to the one with measurable objective.

Deepening the study for reading, increase its importance in a general communication in foreign language. Its complexity in many areas, affects not only the actors that play inside a class but also even the ones outside it.

---

**Keywords:** Communication, procedure, stimulation, game, interactive method

## Introduction

As any other activities, reading has its own theory and practice which are closely interlinked. Theory intends to show the way to be followed to accomplish the relevant objectives.

Experience has proven that reading process is at a higher level when students have a project of reading or of its previously set objectives. There may be a wide range of reading objectives at school. Reading is for information, learning, execution of a given task, pleasure etc.

## Main Text

Whichever is the purpose of reading proposed to the students, it would be helpful to divide the reading process in several phases:

### First phase: Awakening of interest

The students have a quick text reading to capture its elements such as title, subtitle, source, data etc, in order to help them have an initial assumption over the general meaning. Some reading guidelines are related to the nature of message (if we are dealing with a letter, an article, newspaper, part of novel etc), nature of language used (familiar, argotic, technical language etc), nature of recipient (for whom the message is sent), nature of writer (Is he/she the same person? A group of persons? Is he/she coherent? Does he/she speak about himself/herself ? Does he/she give his/her opinion? )

Communication and use of reading start since the initial stage. Questions made to the students highlight only those skin-deep features disguising the core elements.

### **Second phase: discovery of the meaning of main ideas**

In this phase the text should be read in details and very attentively. After the termination of questions of the first phase, it is proceeded with a silent reading during which the main ideas may be drawn. In case of a story, the identification of main characters may be sought, places where events occur, drafting of a list of the main events. Questions of « true/false » type are used with the view of promptly finding out if the text is understood. This fairly rapid reading is a key phase as it prepares the ground for the student to have an overview of the reported ideas. Further, the text is again read in silence but that time more carefully, in order to retrieve the proper information. This phase is developed for the more advanced students. Its assessment may be conducted through techniques and activities such as discussion, oral or written questions, multiple choice questions, tabular presentations etc. During these activities the students have the chance to use new words and expressions revealed to them in the first phase, i.e. the one of awakening of interest. After making sure that students have properly realized the ideas expressed in the text, they are required to further proceed and express their critical judgment on it, based on the ideas drawn. In this phase the students should read the text in more details and more attentively.

### **Third phase: realization of meaning**

By information drawn from the text, the students attempt to realize a previously set objective, as for instance the construction of a genetic tree according to family descriptions, designing a scheme of movement of trains, drawings on the basis of written descriptions etc.

The guidelines we will suggest are comprehensive as they are directed to the general public, at schools, universities and course centers but they also include all communication skills.

The initial reading serves to have an idea on the general meaning. The text should be read for the first time without writing and underlining anything. The complete reading is done without focusing on difficult words or expressions.

Second reading is related to the elaboration of reading procedure. During the second reading, students highlight sections they deem as the main and interesting ones. The underlined words and paragraphs should be interrelated, in order to form a shorter and coherent text, thus highlighting the personal understanding of the student. They may ask teacher's help or consult the dictionary only if they do not know any keywords but should find the text meaning by themselves.

### **Comparison of procedures through collective discussion**

The students should compare their procedure with the one of other readers and see differences and common aspects. Further, they need to change their procedure to improve it, if appropriate. Discussion allows the analysis of different versions of each student. The discussion is initially based on the text analysis and interpretation. Reading becomes a source of exchange of opinions, without being only a pedagogical prerequisite but also a communication need.

### **Explanation of a pending question, individual work**

After discussion, it is necessary to adopt a personal attitude to the text and reading, asking the students to reflect individually and each of them should specify the method of text reading, thus constituting for the teacher a subject of assessment.

The students should explain verbally or in writing, what they wish to highlight, justifying it as properly argued. This exercise should be carried out during one class. Firstly, it allows the student to study the text in his own way. The activities to follow are linked with a systematic study about the text features, most of which lead to the writing procedures.

### **First contact with the text encourages reading**

A compulsory reading is required in the class but the way how the teacher introduces it to the students encourages further reading. The preliminary text presentation is very important as it may cause a positive, neutral or negative feedback.

The purpose of preliminary presentation is to give students significant directions in harmony with their knowledge and sense of maturity. Accordingly, the presentation of a text is largely dependent on the public and method of teaching.

Some of the following guidelines may be used for a text presentation:

- Cite the work from which the selected text for study is extracted.
- State the author of work in question and the time in which he/she has written it.
- Specify the features of the literary genre he/she belongs to.
- Specify the relations of that work with other works of the same author.
- State the psychological and socio-cultural background of the author etc.

### **Reading skills and their classification**

Reading skills differ from one student to another and as such, we may group them in three levels:

**Basic skills:** the students are required to draw visible information of the written section. The students with these skills understand for whom or what it is about and properly highlights information.

**Advanced skills:** students with these skills identify:

1 – internal links of the written section such as casual link, chronological link or reference link.

2 - discovery of main rules of written language such as adjustments, types of sentences, verbal forms etc.

3 – use of context such as for instance the use of polysemy for the text meaning.

**Excellent skills:** the students of this level are able to read between the lines and discover what the author implies without openly stating it. The students find the text connotation and meaning of a word or sentence across the context or comparing two pieces of information.

### **Skill distinguished students**

“Know how to read”. They are capable to understand any types of written documents. They practice reading by more sustainable linguistic means and will be more motivated than the ones who possess only basic skills. When class work is performed with a written document, the primary objective is not its immediate understanding but learning reading strategies, thus making the students acquire long-term skills and instill in them the desire of reading diverse texts of high level linguistic complexity.

The activities for use of reading strategies should aim at an active, independent reader to cope with the text length or difficulty.

Communication reading presupposes the application of interactive methods. This is one of the directions of the curriculum of foreign languages, to make students active participants of the reading process and build the groundwork to express and develop their individuality, an objective to be emphasized in the first pages of the curriculum.

The work in groups is based on these methods. Most of the activities related to the text are realized with the work in groups.

Written texts have always a thematic character. This means that the teacher chooses a particular topic in accordance with the interests and psychology of the age group he/she works with, selecting in accordance with it the reading sections to be elaborated in the classroom, so that the students become skilled in both written understanding and oral and written communication.

In the new textbooks the students and teachers will find a wide range of topics linked with the daily life, problems and concerns of the adolescents, their desires and dreams for the future and other related topics recommended in the national curriculum.

New texts drafted on the basis of curriculum guidelines, bring an innovation in respect of the acquisition of cultural skills of the students, one of the three main objectives of the reading process. By reading, students will also develop positive skills and attitudes to the culture and lifestyle of other peers living abroad and will better reflect on their culture.

The texts offer a diversity of socio-cultural situations with authentic documents making the students react as if they were within a real communication environment.

Awareness to other cultures is linked not only with the authentic material presented in the texts but also with the students and features such as:

- their attitudes: being open and interested in new ideas, new experiences, other peoples and civilizations;
- if they have the will to pursue a relativist approach to their views and system of cultural values;
- if they show readiness and skill to stray from attitudes and prejudices on cultural gaps.

The students come in the classroom with a general culture acquired from their experience, educational system and means of information. In the reading texts they face sensitive daily life changes such as food, drinks, meals, way of sitting at the table and laying the table; regular leave, leisure time, timetables and working skills ; standard of living, living conditions, social insurance, interpersonal relations, society structures, relations with the state, work, within the family and between generations etc.

To ensure a richer text with both linguistic and social and cultural information, it should be accompanied by photographs, drawings, maps, tables and statistics. Additionally, its presentation has to underscore the objectives of the author.

Before the students are directly exposed to the written document, the teacher may develop a series of activities prior to reading, to sensitize and gradually familiarize them with the topic.

The teacher may introduce the students to the type of document they will have in front of them such as an interview, bulletin, poetry, shopping list etc.

He/ She:

- may provide some benchmarks to facilitate the meaning.
- may make an overview of the content of document.
- may give some words or expressions to help the students imagine the content of document and the latter has to be compared with the original.
- may distribute an abridged version of the document with missing words for the students to fill them out by understanding across the context.
- may work only with the title, asking the students to imagine what it is about and compare their product with the original text etc.

This phase serves the teacher to employ and practically use all knowledge acquired by the students until that time, applying it in a specific situation.

In the second phase of reading, the teacher may ask questions directly linked with the understanding of the written document.

-The students look in the text for information about the scene, acting characters, time of event, namely highlighting concrete facts answering the questions: Who / Where? When? Why? How? What?

- The students are guided to find the main idea of the text, seeking elements to judge about the author's style; if it is journalistic, literary or familiar etc.

-The teacher guides them to discover the meaning of words in the context, find elements to argue the type of written document, giving also examples from their experience.

-The teacher may distribute the same text, where the paragraphs or events are irregularly placed and the students standardize the chronology and their coherence. This would make them discuss within the group to agree on the version they will introduce.

-In separate pages the teacher may give the words of different characters and the students should find out their author.

-The teacher may distribute the text removing some words to be found out by the students and put them in the proper section supplementing the meaning of the sentence. It may occur that the student does not remember the word used in the text but says a synonym he/she has previously learned. This is a fact to be positively assessed by the teacher and the right word is concurrently given.

-The same method may be also applied to interrupted sentences to be completed, in order to have the meaning given by the text author.

There may be a wide range of activities, suffice that teachers use imagination and have adequate will to work.

During the third phase, after reading and comprehensive meaning of the written document, a more advanced work needs to be done.

In this phase the students are proposed activities allowing them to personally react to the text, share their opinions and feelings and draw a connection between what is articulated in the text and their life experience. Therefore, teaching enters into a more advanced phase, such as the extension to communication objective which is also the ultimate goal of the reading process.

-After reading they discuss about the problem posed and provide a solution, arguing it by linguistic means and techniques of reading they have just finished. At that time, the new linguistic material they have studied helps them express themselves.

-Interviewing games in different groups may be organized in the classroom about the issue in question.

-Opinion polls of all students are organized, with a division of pro and against opinions on the proposed solution.

-According to their own groups, the students may be given different texts about the same topic, with potential contradictory context. They should agree between them to find out those elements. After in-group discussions, work is done to compile the proper text. The texts of all groups are compared, explaining the reasons of use of a certain linguistic structure or meaning unit.

-The same method may be applied by distributing photos in groups, and postcards or drawings with a content on the same topic and the students are required to draft a specific text where the document contents is written. In this case, the teacher shifts from an oral meaning-oriented activity to a written product, thus harmonizing the four skills constituting the main objectives of the curriculum and standards of achievements in the reading process as a means of linguistic and cultural communication.

Texts represent a basic material both for the study and acquisition of lexical and grammatical linguistic structures to be elaborated by the teacher, proposing other contexts

other than those offered in the text, in order to realize the skill of students to participate in various communication situations they may face.

Regarding the topic on students' friendship, they are required to describe by adjectives the physical and moral representation of their best friend and others may give the opposite meaning of those adjectives without depicting any students in the classroom.

The students are required to furnish as many reasons or causes as possible which may break up a potential friendship between them and justify their opinion. To ensure a game-oriented activity, the oddest reasons may be given in order to create a lively classroom environment.

If the students are asked the question: "If you were a Mayor, what would you change in the city?", they will seriously think how the living conditions in the city might be changed, express their wishes and react to the present conditions to have a European city. The teacher may develop this discussion in the form of a competition between the classroom groups, where one group will serve as a jury to vote the best options and the winning group. This invitation makes the students discuss with each other with the view of identifying the best options and the best experience they acknowledge so far.

In reference of the foregoing, the students establish a potentially new education, assessing the ideas and opinions of friends and developing their personal ones or substituting their unconsolidated opinions with more clear ideas. In this connection, an interesting activity is also the game, which has always formational and educational character. Its purpose is that students reinforce their knowledge by entertaining themselves, without having the impression that they are learning. For example,,: *Amuse yourselves establishing some order and clarity in the speech of your Member of Parliament*. Phrases are irregularly built and without any logical connection, so the task of the student is to put them in order to express clear ideas. This is amusing and makes them laugh with the odd combinations they may find.

Such funny and diversified activities make learning more attractive, dynamic, relaxing, involving all students to participate and share their own opinions, meeting the purpose of communication.

Even if we analyze international tests such as Delf and Dalf, in which the four skills are measured, reading always constitutes the starting point of any written or oral communication.

Since the first part of exam which is listening, we guide the students that before listening, they should read the questions written in the text and from there they start to understand what they will hear and after listening, they communicate by completing the written questions.

In the second part of exam, reading, they are focused to shift to a couple of readings until reaching the communication in writing, answering to the questions under the reading section.

Even in the third part which is writing, after reading the topic the students start to communicate with themselves, looking for ideas and strategies to highlight what they know, judging and assessing in accordance with the topic chosen for that test.

As regards the last part of exam including expression skills, the students choose a short text between the two proposed ones. They are guided to discover the issue raised in the text. They should introduce their properly argued view and defend it also during the debate.

Reading is the source of communication development in the four measured skills, listening, reading, writing and speaking.

## Conclusion

Reading process is an integral part of the reading process in general as the whole activity of understanding written texts cannot be developed out of the scope of communication

activities, discussions and debates or common questions and answers where everyone in the classroom has his own attitude to the text.

Indeed, to understand a text means to be capable to go beyond verbal forms of speech, in order to identify the ideas 'hidden' in it, compare them with the previous knowledge; distinguish what is essential, new and make use of the body of knowledge.

Although many pedagogical practices have been positively developed in this field, there is still much to be done. Many issues about the main factors of reading evolve around two components: reader and text. They need other empirical data, without disregarding the affective and emotional factors during the reading class.

A continuous review of the criteria for selection of texts helps above all with the presentation of an interesting document or material for the students.

### **References:**

Coste, D., "Reading and communication skill", FDM No. 141, 1978.

Different methods of teaching foreign languages.

Hymes, D. H., "Towards the communication skill" Didier, Paris, 1984.

"My Common European framework of reference for languages", publication of the Council of Europe, 1998.

"Common European Framework of References for Languages", Council of Europe (CoE), Didier, 2001.

"Modern national curriculum of foreign languages for pre-university public education", Tirane 2000.

Moirand, S., "Learning communication in foreign language", Hachette, 1982.

Standards of content and achievements in language-reading and foreign language, publication of ISP, 2002.

Reussir le Delf, niveau B2 CIEP , Didier, janvier 2006