הבנת הנקרא

מרמה אפס ומעלה

חלק 1

teacher's guide

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January 2021

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Introduction

What is reading comprehension? What is reading for meaning? To comprehend and, later, also pass tests successfully, we need to guarantee 5 things:

1. Fluent decoding (practiced in our SoftRead books)

2. Knowing the meaning of standalone words

3. Mastering word order and its effect on the meaning of a sentence

4. Comprehending the abstract idea of sentences and paragraphs

5. Being able to refer to an idea in writing (answering open/closed questions)

This series works on items 2 through 5.

Reading comprehension is not equivalent to ticking multiple choice answers. If we want our students to truly understand what they read, and not just train to pass tests, we need to practice their reading and understanding, and eventually make sure they ALSO ENJOY what they read. Unfortunately, we usually concentrate solely on passing tests.

Hence, for the sake of tests and matriculation exams, if we want to cater to and help low-level high school students when there is not much time left to study, I strongly recommend using the passive learning technique. Using this technique, one can achieve a satisfactory level of reading comprehension and pass the test with an average grade.

To summarize, this series introduces a different approach to enlarge vocabulary and to practice reading comprehension by implementing various methodologies and techniques. All that is needed is to have confidence in the road you are both taking.

On a personal note, before continuing, it is important to mention that the methodology used in my RC practice books is frequently completely different from what teachers are used to. I urge you to try and keep an open mind. I am introducing here a different way to practice reading comprehension, especially for those who have language disorders and language-based learning difficulties.

About passive learning and the importance of highlighting

1. Speaking and writing are active skills, in which we are the initiators and the creators of the content. Reading and listening are more passive, where we don't initiate and don't produce. Passive skills require us to be receptive, but not creative or productive.

2. Our RC books focus on passive learning. We want students to reach reading comprehension, which is a passive skill, as efficiently and as quickly as possible. This means the material can also be learned passively, i.e. through **exposure** and **experience,** rather than through active practice and drilling grammar patterns and reproduction. We **do not** teach "do", "does" or "Xing", nor do we use the names of the terms. We choose to focus passively on patterns and vocabulary enrichment.

3. To ensure passive acquisition of the features and components of the newly learned pattern, the student is required to highlight the elements comprising it. Highlighting is a great passive-learning tool to visually remember what is being emphasized. It encourages students to shine a light on the essential parts of the pattern.

4. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure the student is highlighting correctly.

How about grammar definitions

To ensure optimum learning we **avoid** definitions and terms like *to be*. We consider "is" and, later, "are" as part of the organic language. In my opinion, dwelling on definitions only makes it harder to learn a language.

How to remember new vocabulary

One of the main complaints made by teachers and parents is that students don't have a sufficient vocabulary, that it is too small, and that they don't remember the words, even though they have been taught and practiced.

Providing lists of words for students to memorize and later to be tested on, is not the best way to retain new vocabulary. Lists of words cannot easily be remembered, especially not by learners with language disorders. Those words tend to be forgotten about 10 days after the test. That is, if the student manages to learn them. Students are usually reluctant to memorize lists of words, and many experience failures, disappointments and frustration. This also applies to those who take entrance exams to universities and colleges.

Very often, students undergo pedagogical assessments which conclude that they suffer

from a memory deficit. Today, it is known that memory deficit can be "repaired" by training the memory and the brain. By activating the brain, it will remember the new vocabulary much better. Working memory is a key feature in learning, especially when learning a new language.

Another problem students face is wholistic comprehension. Even though they may know a word and understand its meaning, when it appears in a sentence they might not understand the meaning of the whole sentence. This very often happens due to a lack of awareness of word order in English. Some students may experience this difficulty even in their L1 let alone when they need to understand longer sentences in L2. It is difficult to understand that, in the phrase "a car company" the word car describes the company, whereas in the phrase "a company car" the word company describes the car.

As a teacher, I had difficulties in finding suitable practice passages for lower levels and beginners who were older. Most of the materials were either too childish or too difficult. I felt there was a need for suitable materials for older students but at a beginner's level, which would give a comprehensive answer to those difficulties.

Furthermore, I personally find it mandatory to train a student to learn independently and autonomously and, by applying the method and technique introduced and used in these books, I truly believe this can be achieved. It all depends on the facilitator's patience to train the student to do it right.

Here are some unique features of this RC series:

1. **Decoding** – first and foremost, we should make sure the student is an independent decoder. This should have been trained and achieved beforehand but, as a starting point and an opportunity to review, a summary of AdvancedSoftRead is included at the beginning of each book. The summary includes illustrations of most reading/ spelling patterns.

2. **Structure** - the units are well structured, and develop from ZERO upwards. The ZERO level allows the teacher to choose where to start, and at what point to commence after testing the student's level and abilities.

3. **Grammar** - the materials are based on grammatical structures, and new patterns are gradually introduced and practiced; i.e. not only vocabulary is introduced, but grammatical structures, as well. Each new grammatical structure is first explained and then practiced. Initially in short sentences, and only then it is interwoven into passages, stories, or dialogs. Summarizing grammar charts are provided at the end of each book.

4. **New vocabulary -** new vocabulary is introduced in 4 different ways:

    a. **Pictionary** - at the beginning of each book there are 16 pages of illustrated lexical items

    b. **Word bank** – each assignment has its word bank to supplement the words that do not appear on the Pictionary.

    c. **Green** words – one of the assignments is to match between the **blue** word, probably new to the student, and the **green** word, which is the L1 translation, based on the context. Here the words are not given as in the word bank, but need to be found based on context.

    d. **Red** words – another assignment regarding new vocabulary is to elicit the meaning of new words based on the guidelines provided in the assignment. More about this technique below.

5. **Easy to understand** - everything is explained in L1 and is demonstrated in sample sentences. This enables the student to work independently and autonomously.

6. **Visibility** - the books have a high standard of visibility and are extremely friendly to use.

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7. **Learning activities - the books provide diversified activities which guarantee** success:

a. **Elicitation** – one of the techniques that ensures long term memory of new words is to elicit them, i.e. the student him/herself will try and understand what the word means based on the context. This requires understanding most of the sentence components, on the basis of which the meaning of the new, unfamiliar word can be elicited. It does not mean that the student needs to suggest the exact or accurate meaning, but with a rough more-or-less idea of what it might be. This technique needs to be trained and, if necessary, first in L1 and only then in English. Of course, the process does require thinking. Unfortunately, many students are not trained to think and certainly not in L2. That is also why the series starts from a complete ZERO, allowing the teacher to choose where to begin to train the student using this different technique. True, it is time consuming and needs more intervention and facilitation at the beginning, but once the technique is understood the student will enthusiastically accept and implement it.

In order to succeed with the process two things should be avoided:
- The use of dictionaries, since dictionaries are not a learning tool
- The teacher's assistance with translating the unfamiliar words. The teacher should guide the student to find the meaning by him/herself, either within the resources provided in the book or by eliciting.

What are the outstanding advantages of the eliciting technique?

Elicitation trains the student to think and to anticipate what comes next. To envision the text, to live it. We start the training within a simple contextual environment where the student feels at ease. One cannot train people when they are not at ease because then there is no learning, only frustration. Our trainees must feel at ease and comfortable, confident they can do it. Learning to think is a side benefit when it comes to teaching a language, but it should be a goal on its own, and it is a great tool to enable long term vocabulary retention.

How does it work?

This is our red word assignment. Words in **red** are the ones to be guessed, based on contextual clues. The clues may appear before, in or after the examined sentence. The student is trained not to stop because s/he doesn't understand a word but to keep on reading and looking for clues. As a rule, we do not look up words in dictionaries and we do not ask our teacher for the meaning. This might come as a shock to many teachers, but I consider dictionaries to be used only an emergency. Only when there is no other way to find out the meaning of a word will we use dictionaries, and certainly not as a learning tool. Words that have been looked up are not well remembered. Words

that have been "worked for" will be remembered for much longer. When thinking is involved the brain is engaged, thus guaranteeing long term memory.

In the text there are detailed guidelines in L1 for the student to guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word. The expectation is that the student will give an estimated meaning - not necessarily an accurate one. For example, if *fine* or *good* are given as a translation of the word *great,* that should be good enough. To elicit the idea that the adjective means something good or bad, means that the student understands the text. If s/he knows what word the adjective actually describes in the sentence, that means s/he understands the logic of the word order. Together with the student the teacher may then fine-tune the translation. Very often the students succeed in coming up with the correct and accurate meaning. Meanings that have been processed in this way are better remembered than words that have just been looked up and then copied and pasted, so to speak. To help the student with the **red** word assignments, a blank chart is provided with 3 columns: the original word, the assumption the student gave, and the correct translation after checking with a teacher, parent or the dictionary.

Once the student has finished translating the story and has given his/her assumptions, with or without translating everything, the teacher will go over them together with the student. What counts is whether the assumptions are reasonable within the context. Again, we don't need precision at this stage but a reasonable guess. The teacher together with the student will fine-tune the assumptions and give the correct translation.

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Two things to be avoided:

As a rule…

- Do not look up words in dictionaries! Dictionaries are not a learning tool.

- The teacher does not answer when the student asks for the meaning, but rather guides him/her to find the meaning by him/herself.

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Red word assignment – optional answers (answers you may expect your students to come up with and approve as good guesses): do not forget to discuss the assumptions and to correct them.

Red Word	Optional assumptions waiting on the exact meaning		Correct translation
Beach	A place where we can see the sea	ים, חוף ים	חוף ים
Mall	A place to buy clothes, shop, market, shopping center	חנות, דוכן בשוק, מחסן בגדים, מרכז קניות, קניון	קניון
Meet	See, visit	לראות, להיפגש, לבקר	להיפגש
Buy	Take, try on, see, look at	לראות, למדוד, לקנות	לקנות
Enjoy it	Have fun, see you, have a good day	להתראות, ביי, ניתראה, שיהיה לך יום טוב	תיהנה

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