

הבנת הנקרא

מרמה אפס ומעלה

חלק 3

teacher's guide

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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.

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

Page 40 - red word assignment

In order to train the student to detect the words, s/he should follow the guidelines which are in L1.

| Red words | Acceptable optional alternatives | חלופות אפשריות שמתקבלות | תרגום מדויק |
|------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| cute | small, nice, babyish | קטן, נחמד, תינוקי | חמוד |
| teddy bear | dolls | בובות | דובון |
| arms | hands, waist, knees | ידיים, מתניים, ברכיים | זרועות |
| change | put on | לעטות | להחליף |

Pages 40-41 - comprehension check

11 open and yes/no questions including 3 questions which require the student's personal involvement.

Page 41 - vocabulary review chart

From the organizational aspect, it is recommended for the student to start with the words s/he knows, and only then to refer to resources in the book, such as the word banks and the Pictionary.

Pages 42-43 - dialog between a diner and a reporter

All these texts use the present simple and do not integrate tenses that have not been introduced in this series so far. Here, nine new words are introduced in the **blue** word bank and eight **red** words as part of the **red** word assignment. Among the **blue** words we have the word **kind** which has two different meanings and the word **quite**, which also requires special attention to differentiate it from **quiet**.

The guidelines guide the learner where to look for the clues and what to anticipate.