



DIDACTIC-METHODIC INPUT FOR READING

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It has been agreed and stated in the document *Good Practice Exercises – General Comments* that reading skills will be developed on the basis of **authentic** medical / paramedical texts. This document provides us with information about teaching strategies as well as will help us plan reading activities in classroom environment and create teaching materials.

Strategies used in teaching reading:

- strategies to perform reading activities may be introduced during classroom teaching:

1. Before reading: Plan for the reading task

- ✓ set a purpose or decide in advance what to read for
- ✓ decide if more linguistic or background knowledge is needed
- ✓ determine whether to enter the text from the top down (attend to the overall meaning) or from the bottom up (focus on the words and phrases)

2. During and after reading: Monitor comprehension

- ✓ verify predictions and check for inaccurate guesses
- ✓ decide what is and is not important to understand
- ✓ reread to check comprehension

3. After reading: Evaluate comprehension and strategy use

- ✓ evaluate comprehension in a particular task or area
- ✓ evaluate overall progress in reading and in particular types of reading tasks
- ✓ decide if the strategies used were appropriate for the purpose and for the task
- ✓ modify strategies if necessary

- strategies that can help students read more quickly and effectively:

- ✓ **previewing:** reviewing titles, section headings, and photo captions to get a sense of the structure and content of a reading selection
- ✓ **predicting:** using knowledge of the subject matter to make predictions about content and vocabulary and check comprehension; using knowledge of the text type and purpose to make predictions about discourse structure; using knowledge about the author to make predictions about writing style, vocabulary, and content



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- ✓ **skimming and scanning:** using a quick survey of the text to get the main idea, identify text structure, confirm or question predictions
- ✓ **guessing from context:** using prior knowledge of the subject and the ideas in the text as clues to the meanings of unknown words, instead of stopping to look them up
- ✓ **paraphrasing:** stopping at the end of a section to check comprehension by restating the information and ideas in the text

How to develop reading activities – general rules:

Developing reading activities involves more than identifying a text that is "at the right level," writing a set of comprehension questions for students to answer after reading, handing out the assignment and sending students away to do it. A fully-developed reading activity supports students as readers through pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities.

As you design reading tasks, keep in mind that complete recall of all the information in a text is an unrealistic expectation even for native speakers. Reading activities that are meant to increase communicative competence should be success oriented and build up students' confidence in their reading ability.

1. Construct the reading activity around a purpose that has significance for the students

Make sure students understand what the purpose for reading is: to get the main idea, obtain specific information, understand most or all of the message, enjoy a story, or decide whether or not to read more. Recognizing the purpose for reading will help students select appropriate reading strategies.

2. Define the activity's instructional goal and the appropriate type of response

In addition to the main purpose for reading, an activity can also have one or more instructional purposes, such as practicing or reviewing specific grammatical constructions, introducing new vocabulary, or familiarizing students with the typical structure of a certain type of text.

3. Check the level of difficulty of the text

The factors listed below can help you judge the relative ease or difficulty of a reading text for a particular purpose and a particular group of students.



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- **How is the information organized?** Does the story line, narrative, or instruction conform to familiar expectations? Texts in which the events are presented in natural chronological order, which have an informative title, and which present the information following an obvious organization (main ideas first, details and examples second) are easier to follow.
- **How familiar are the students with the topic?** Remember that misapplication of background knowledge due to cultural differences can create major comprehension difficulties.
- **Does the text contain redundancy?** At the lower levels of proficiency, listeners may find short, simple messages easier to process, but students with higher proficiency benefit from the natural redundancy of authentic language.
- **Does the text offer visual support to aid in reading comprehension?** Visual aids such as photographs, maps, and diagrams help students preview the content of the text, guess the meanings of unknown words, and check comprehension while reading.

Remember that the level of difficulty of a text is not the same as the level of difficulty of a reading task.

How to teach reading – pre-reading activities:

Pre-reading activities are most important at lower levels of language proficiency and at earlier stages of reading instruction.

The activities you use during pre-reading may serve as preparation for reading in several ways.

During pre-reading you may:

- assess students' background knowledge of the topic and linguistic content of the text
- give students the background knowledge necessary for comprehension of the text, or activate the existing knowledge that the students possess
- clarify any cultural information which may be necessary to comprehend the passage
- make students aware of the type of text they will be reading and the purpose(s) for reading
- provide opportunities for group or collaborative work and for class discussion activities

Sample pre-reading activities:

- using the title, subtitles, and divisions within the text to predict content and organization or sequence of information
- looking at pictures, maps, diagrams, or graphs and their captions
- talking about the author's background, writing style, and usual topics
- skimming to find the theme or main idea and eliciting related prior knowledge



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- reviewing vocabulary or grammatical structures
- reading over the comprehension questions to focus attention on finding that information while reading

How to teach reading – while-reading activities:

In **while-reading activities**, students check their comprehension as they read. The purpose for reading determines the appropriate type and level of comprehension.

- When reading for specific information, students need to ask themselves, *have I obtained the information I was looking for?*
- When reading for pleasure, students need to ask themselves, *Do I understand the story line/sequence of ideas well enough to enjoy reading this?*
- When reading for thorough understanding (intensive reading), students need to ask themselves, *Do I understand each main idea and how the author supports it? Does what I'm reading agree with my predictions, and, if not, how does it differ?* To check comprehension in this situation, students may
 - stop at the end of each section to review and check their predictions, restate the main idea and summarize the section
 - use the comprehension questions as guides to the text, stopping to answer them as they read

How to teach reading by using authentic medical articles – general rules

- we cannot forget about the **communicative** objective to be fulfilled
- promote **reading for ideas**, rather than for **word recognition**
- the purpose of a reading exercise will be to **gain information** or to **verify existing knowledge**
- we read for different **aims** we have different **approach** to reading activities – a student shall be conscious whether he is reading to get an **overview**, he needs **specific information** or he reads the text for pure enjoyment
- a scientific article mostly requires the knowledge of scientific vocabulary, understanding of facts / rules presented, cause-effect sequences and hypotheses



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Authentic medical articles:

- give students an opportunity to read and discuss an article which is on current issues and of current interest – it promotes more natural reactions
- different authentic structures may be taught / reviewed
- authentic medical terms are introduced / reviewed
- they may be the basis for longer communication activities like discussions, panel discussions, presentations, etc.
- they promote natural and practical approach to grammar and vocabulary teaching. Once the structures are noticed within a text their use and the rules governing them may be discussed, e.g. :
 - grammar tenses explained
 - passive voice
 - reported speech
 - (medical) collocations
 - prepositional phrases
 - medical abbreviations
 - medical compounds
- classroom teaching may also promote reading the texts aloud which will strengthen correct pronunciation patterns

How to teach reading by using authentic medical articles?

- introduce the main topic of reading comprehension by initiating a discussion on a similar /interconnected topic by e.g. eliciting a **mind-map** from them
- pre-teach new scientific (medical) vocabulary
- inform if it is reading for general or specific purposes

Rather than simplifying a text by changing its language, make it more approachable by eliciting students' existing knowledge in pre-reading discussion, reviewing new vocabulary before reading, and asking students to perform tasks that are within their competence, such as skimming to get the main idea or scanning for specific information, before they begin intensive reading.

- every module might consist of two reading comprehension tasks – the first one being more general, sharing main ideas; the second one talking on a topic in a more specific / precise way



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- make the **reading purpose** clear and authentic – as the text is authentic the reading purpose shall also be; students shall see a point in the task which should have some relevance to them. Having a text assigned by the teacher is not an authentic reason for reading a text.
- In order to make reading authentic ask students how they plan to use the language they are learning and what topics they are interested in reading and learning about. Our task is to prepare post-reading exercises to enhance authentic use of medical language.
- decide on pre-experience of target learners, if the text's content suits work environment and supports in-work objectives
- an authentic reading may initiate a writing task (as homework assignment), e.g. a report

We shall also agree on using **abridged versions of authentic medical texts** in order to adapt them to the needs / level of students (B1/B2). Sometimes it happens that simplifying a text by changing the language removes natural redundancy and makes the organization somewhat difficult for students to predict. So – this actually makes a text more difficult to read than if the original was used.

What is your approach – shall original/authentic texts be found to already suit B1/B2 (according to CEFR) requirements or we shall prepare abridged versions of more complicated texts?

During Klaipeda Partner Meeting it was decided that difficult authentic texts will be abridged and adapted to students' needs. Emma will verify if the shortened version is understandable and linguistically correct.



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How to choose a good (medical) reading:

1. Decide on an article that illustrates your issue.
2. The introductory paragraphs of the article must clearly state the significance of the problem.
3. Be critical throughout your reading – ask questions after every section – have the objectives been achieved?
4. Check if the title indicates the content?
5. Is the issue identified and discussed clearly and concisely?
6. Is the text adequate for language practice?
7. Does the text bring in any scientific knowledge?
8. Is the register / language adequate to your teaching objectives (e.g. does it go in line with the topic?)

References:

1. <http://www.nclrc.org/>
2. Allum V., *Teaching English for Medical Purposes*