

DEVELOPING READING SKILLS

A guide for language teachers



Contents

Trinity's approach to language skills	1
Understanding reading	2
Classroom techniques	3
Adapting and creating reading resources	4
Trinity language support resources	6
Glossary of terms	6
Further teacher development	7

USING THIS GUIDE

- ▶ This guide aims to provide a resource for teachers looking to explore and develop reading skills with their language learners.
- ▶ Definitions of terms marked with an asterisk (*) can be found in the Glossary of terms.
- ▶ Look out for the Top tips boxes.



These boxes give extra ideas, resources and commentary related to developing this skill.

Trinity's approach to language skills

Trinity believes that authentic communication is fundamental in language learning and assessment. As such, a collaborative, dynamic approach to learning and teaching is central to developing learners' language skills, reflecting how language is used beyond the classroom. This includes exploring not only each of the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) in isolation, but also how the skills relate to and are used in combination with the others.



Top tips

Personalisation

Before asking learners to read a text, consider how it might relate to their personal experiences to arouse their interest. After they have finished reading, ask for their opinion or reaction to the content.



Understanding reading

When exploring reading with our learners, it's important for both teachers and learners to be aware of why we read and some of the processes and sub-skills* involved.

1. In our day-to-day lives, we read texts and graphics for different purposes. For example, we read novels for pleasure or study, cinema schedules for key information, and business emails for work.
2. We approach different texts in different ways, depending on the context. We might read a long news article slowly and intensively if it is a topic we want to focus on, for instance, but skim or scan the same article to extract key information quickly. When we start reading in a second language, our reading is slower and tasks more challenging as we work on these skills.
3. We don't need to understand every single word in a text to understand the general message.
4. In some cases, where we understand enough of the surrounding text, we may be able to work out the general meaning of unknown vocabulary.
5. We often respond to things we read. For example, we reply to messages or emails, use the information we read to write reports or give presentations, and react to and comment on social media and news stories. It is important to understand the message in the written text clearly before we respond to or share it.



Top tips

Reading for pleasure

Lend learners graded* readers, encourage them to find and share bloggers and content creators to follow online, and point them towards trustworthy news outlets.



Classroom techniques

There are many approaches to developing reading skills. Whichever you take, the following techniques will help address the key points noted above.

1. Engage learners with the content of a text before they read it. Activate their interest and previous knowledge of the topic in open class discussion. Give learners a reason to read by predicting content or comparing what they know to what is presented in the text.
2. Include tasks that require learners to initially skim or scan a text within tight but reasonable time limits before they go on to read it again in more detail. This will help increase their reading speed.
3. Create reading tasks that match the way they would naturally approach a text in their first language. For example, skimming a news site to find an article of interest, scanning a web page for prices or contact details, and reading an assignment task in detail.
4. Train learners to appreciate that not understanding every word won't necessarily block their understanding of the writer's message. We can often skip over unknown words and phrases and use the context to work out the overall meaning.
5. Create a glossary of any words or phrases your learners may not know and are essential to understanding the text, where appropriate.
6. Help learners understand how discourse* markers, layout and other such features are used by writers to clearly convey their message and tone within a text.
7. Use reading tasks as a steppingstone to developing other skills in class. For example, ask learners to discuss their opinions on what they have read, create a presentation on a similar topic, write a response to the text, write a similar text, or summarise the main idea(s) presented in the text.

Vocabulary



Top tips

Reading texts gives learners the opportunity to see vocabulary in context. Encourage them to record new language of interest that can be recycled in different ways both in and beyond the classroom.



Adapting and creating reading resources

Finding or creating reading texts to use in the classroom can be a rewarding and engaging experience for both the teacher and learners.

Authentic texts like articles, online reviews, posters and signs, can be used in their original form or adapted, depending on their appropriacy and the learners' level. Coursebooks and classroom resource sites also provide texts suitable for a particular language learning context and proficiency level which can be edited to better suit the interests and needs of your learners.

Whatever the source of the text used in class, it is important that the questions and tasks associated with them are appropriately designed to effectively develop reading sub-skills*. The table on the following page provides some ideas as to how to structure questions with a focus on a particular sub-skill. These could be used in a number of ways, such as multiple-choice, gap fill or discussion questions.



Top tips

Discourse analysis

Helping learners understand how a text is organised will help them understand the text and its message. This also feeds into developing key writing sub-skills*.



FOCUS ON	CAN DO	EXAMPLE QUESTION STEMS
Lower order questions		
Retrieval	The reader can retrieve or select information such as main ideas, key details and supporting details.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How did the writer travel to X? ▶ When was X discovered? ▶ What days does X happen?
Language	The reader can understand or deduce the meaning of words, phrases or expressions by using the surround texts within a familiar context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What does X mean in this context? ▶ How can X be rephrased? ▶ Which word in paragraph 1 is most similar in meaning to X?
Text understanding	The reader can recognise the genre*, type or overall purpose of a text, or of parts of a text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What type of text is this? ▶ Who was this text written to/for? ▶ Why was this email/text/blog/written? ▶ Which part of the text introduces a different idea to X? ▶ What does the graph/chart show?
Higher order questions		
Inference	The reader can identify contextual, grammatical and lexical cues to deduce or interpret implicit and implied information, events, meanings and ideas from texts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What does the writer understand about X? ▶ What does the writer suggest about X? ▶ What does the writer imply with the statement X in relation to Y?
Evaluation	The reader can reflect on the content of a text in terms of relationships and relevance.	<p>Relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Why does the writer compare X to Y? ▶ Why is the writer critical of X? ▶ How are X and Y connected? <p>Relevance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What do the writers state to justify/support/explain X? ▶ What information in the text/chart supports the view of X?
Synthesis and integration	The reader can decide on the relevance and usefulness of content between texts and integrate information from them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ According to text B, what is the best solution to the problem described in text A? ▶ Given the findings of text A, what is the role of X in text B? ▶ Which of the three writers disagrees with the others about X? ▶ According to text B, how could X in text A be explained?

Trinity language support resources

Trinity offers a wide range of free English language resources and teaching materials. These support our qualifications, which cover every stage of learning, from beginner to advanced. We offer two-skill oral assessments (GESE: Graded Examinations in Spoken English) and four-skill assessments (ISE: Integrated Skills in English).

Visit trinitycollege.com/qualifications/english-language/English-support-resources to find these.

Replaying a recording



Top tips

Replaying a text (or section of a text) provides further opportunities for learners to develop different listening sub-skills. Consider empowering your learners by giving them control over how many times to listen, within practical boundaries.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CEFR

The Common European Framework of Reference for languages. An international standard for describing language proficiency.

Discourse

The study of language beyond sentence level. Focus on organisation, coherence, purpose, etc.

Genre

Types of written discourse, for example essays, emails, letter of complaint, advert. The genre directly relates to the purpose, organisation, formality of the text and set phrases.

Graded readers

An adapted, 'easy reading' book that has simplified language graded to the learners' level, used to support extensive reading.

Higher/lower order questions

Relating to Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) which categorises different levels of learning.

Personalisation

Allows learners to express their own ideas, preferences or feelings. It can make the language content more meaningful and relevant.

Reading sub-skills

These include:

- ▶ **Skimming:** quickly reading a text to get the gist/an overview of the material
- ▶ **Scanning:** quickly reading a text to locate specific information
- ▶ **Prediction:** anticipating the content of text
- ▶ **Intensive reading:** reading slowly for detail

Further teacher development

Transformative Teachers webinars

This webinar series is aimed at English language teaching professionals who would like to participate in regular development opportunities.

Coordinated by Trinity's Academic team, the webinars include a wide variety of speakers from around the world presenting on current trends and ideas that are shaping how we teach and learn English. Find out more at trinitycollege.com/tesol-events

TESOL qualifications

Trinity's Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) qualifications are designed to support teachers throughout their careers – from early practitioner to experienced professional. Our internationally recognised professional development suite comprises:

Qualification	RQF & EQF levels*	Guided learning hours (GLH)**	Total qualification time (TQT)	Focus of pedagogical knowledge and skills
CertTESOL	Level 5	130	200	Essential TESOL
TYLEC	–	58	100	Specialist young learner TESOL
CertOT	RQF – Level 4 EQF – Level 5	30	50	Specialist online teaching
CertPT	Level 6	30	100	Specialist TESOL professional development
DipTESOL	Level 7	150	600	Advanced TESOL

* RQF = Ofqual's Regulated Qualifications Framework | EQF = European Qualifications Framework

** minimum time






Visit trinitycollege.com/TESOL to learn more.

Trinity Teach English Online: Developing reading skills

This asynchronous online unit from our Trinity Teach English Online course gives you practical and reliable ideas for developing your learners' reading skills in an online lesson. This includes advice, tools and techniques, and videos of real teachers in real classrooms, accompanied by guided observation tasks and professional commentary.

Visit trinitycollege.com/TEO for more details.

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