

I · READING TECHNIQUES

1 Sensitizing

1.1 Inference: Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items through contextual clues

Exercise 1

Specific aim: To train the students to recognize synonyms and antonyms.

Skills involved: Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items.

Understanding relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices of synonymy and antonymy.

Why? Many texts make use of synonyms and antonyms to convey their message more clearly. It is important for the students to be aware of these lexical relations as they often help to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Programming people

Programming people means getting others to act consistently as you want them to act. Stern parents or employers often are pretty good at this, at least while the subjects are under observation. Hypnotists can obtain excellent results in achieving desired behavior from suggestible subjects for short periods.

What interests us here are precise techniques for altering long-term behavior patterns in predictable ways. These new patterns may be desirable by the subject or by the programmer or by the organization employing him.

For achieving certain kinds of long-term programmed behavior the programmer need not be a scientifically trained technologist. Consider how the intense and unattractive Charles Manson horrified and fascinated millions of people a few years ago by his control methods. He had an ability to induce sustained zombie-like behavior in his followers, mostly girls. They committed random murders in the Los Angeles area. When a number of his 'slaves' faced trial they vigorously asserted that the murders were their own idea. They wanted to protect Charlie, who was always somewhere else when the butcheries occurred.

In order to prove his theory that Manson had master-minded the killings the prosecutor, Vincent Bugliosi, had to spend months uncovering and

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analyzing the sources of Manson's control over the presumably free and footloose young people. His most important findings were these:

- Manson was gifted at perceiving the psychological needs of others. He assured runaway girls needing a father that he would be their father. He assured plain-looking girls that they were beautiful.
 - He was careful to destroy preexisting identities. All the members of his clan had to take on new names.
 - He systematically destroyed inhibitions as part of his obedience training.
 - He offered these insecure youngsters a bizarre religion, in which he was the Infinite Being who would lead them to a world of milk and honey.
 - He was careful to identify and probe what each recruit was most afraid of, and to play on it.
 - Finally, Manson apparently had some hypnotic powers.
- Bugliosi succeeded in convincing the jury that Manson was, indeed, responsible for the murders.

(From Vance Packard: *The People Shapers* (Macdonald, 1978))

- a) In paragraph 3, find two nouns meaning more or less the same as 'killings':
- b) In paragraphs 2 and 3, find the equivalents of the following words:
changing:
take place:
declare:
- c) In paragraph 3
 - find an adjective which means the opposite of 'for short periods':
 - find a noun which means the opposite of 'free and footloose young people' (para. 4):
- d) In paragraph 4, find the words which mean the opposite of:
hiding:
fail:

The students could also be asked to match two lists of words (words and their synonyms or antonyms).

Exercise 2

Specific aim: To train the students to recognize related words in a text.

Skills involved: Understanding relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices: lexical sets and collocation.

Why? In a text about a given subject, there will usually be a number of related words that may not be synonyms but that help to create an atmosphere or convey an idea. Being aware that such relations exist and looking for them in a text is important in developing a strategy of inference.

I Reading techniques

In the text 'Programming People', one of the recurring ideas is the loss of one's independence and personality. Read the text again to find all the words related to that idea and fill in the following table.

	<i>nouns</i>	<i>adjectives</i>	<i>verbs</i>
dependence	e.g. slaves		
independence			

Can you think of other words to complete the table?

Exercise 3

Specific aim: To train the students to recognize equivalence and the use of general words to cover more specific ones (hyponymy).

Skills involved: Understanding relations between parts of a text through the lexical cohesion devices of equivalence and hyponymy.

Why? It is extremely helpful to recognize devices such as equivalence and hyponymy when reading a text since both of them give clues to the meaning of words that may not be familiar to the students.

The throw-away spirit or the spirit of wastefulness has become part of American life and consumption only keeps rising. Besides, according to the economists, we depend so much on this wasting and buying that people will probably be encouraged to consume even more in the years to come if the US economy is to prosper. In other words, these marketing experts say that 'the average citizen will have to step up his buying by nearly fifty per cent in the next dozen years, or the economy will sicken.' This means that the producer of household commodities, i.e. a television manufacturer, will have to find some new means of making further sales since nine out of ten American homes nowadays have one television set. He could, for instance, launch a campaign to induce people to have a second TV set – or one for each member of the family – or he could produce a TV set so sophisticated that people would wish to replace their old set. (From Vance Packard: *The Waste Makers* (Pelican, 1961))

- Find at least one instance of synonymy:
- Find at least one instance of antonymy:
- Find at least three markers of equivalence:

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Which of these words introduce(s)

- an example:
- a rephrasing of what has been said before:
- an equivalent expression:

d) Using general words to cover more specific ones:

- i) As an instance of 'producer of household commodities', the writer mentions
- ii) In the text, the word 'marketing expert' is one instance (i.e. it is less general) of what the writer meant when using the word 'economist' before. The relation between the two words can be shown as follows:
economist → marketing expert

Can you complete the following relationship?

producer of household commodities →

Exercise 4

Specific aim: } Same as for exercise 3 but the students are asked
Skills involved: } to fill in a table in order to show the devices used
Why? } to express equivalence.

In each of the following sentences (from D. Hunter and P. Whitten: *The Study of Anthropology* (Harper and Row, 1976)) a different device is used to explain the meaning of a word or an expression. Read the sentences and complete the table.

	<i>word which is explained</i>	<i>explanation (equivalence)</i>	<i>device used</i>
e.g. These characteristics include the regulation of temperature, the capacity for prolonged physical labor, protection against ultraviolet radiation from the sun, immunological (defensive responses to infectious disease) and nutritional and metabolic flexibility.	immunological	defensive	parentheses
In addition, the concept has been criticized as being tautological – that is, circular in its reasoning – and we should examine that accusation.			
They [the Hanunoo] recognize four non-biological components of the environment: daga?, 'ground, soil, earth'; batu, 'rock, stone'; danum, 'water, liquid'; and lanit, 'sky'.			
Exchange marriage, in which two men marry each other's sister, is often found.			
The Greek marriage was monogamous – men and women were allowed only one spouse at a time.			
Many societies, however, practice different kinds of polygamy, or multiple marriages.			

I Reading techniques

A similar kind of exercise can be done at the level of the paragraph. In that case, the explanatory or redundant sentence is introduced by expressions such as 'that is to say', 'in other words', etc.

Exercise 5

Specific aim: To train the students to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Skills involved: Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items through contextual clues.

Why? This kind of exercise (cloze exercise) will make the students realize how much the context can help them to find out the meaning of difficult or unfamiliar words.

Read the following paragraph and try to guess the meaning of the word 'zip'.

Zip was stopped during the war and only after the war did it become popular. What a difference it has made to our lives. It keeps people at home much more. It has made the remote parts of the world more real to us. Photographs show a country, but only *zip* makes us feel that a foreign country is real. Also we can see scenes in the street, big occasions are *zipped*, such as the Coronation in 1953 and the Opening of Parliament. Perhaps the sufferers from *zip* are the notable people, who, as they step out of an aeroplane, have to face the battery of *zip* cameras and know that every movement, every gesture will be seen by millions of people. Politicians not only have to speak well, they now have to have what is called a '*zip* personality'. Perhaps we can sympathize when Members of Parliament say that they do not want debates to be *zipped*.
(From *Britain in the Modern World* by E. N. Nash and A. M. Newth)

- zip* means cinema
 photography
 television
 telephone

Exercise 6

Specific aim: } Same as for exercise 5 but the students have to
Skills involved: } provide missing words that all derive from the
Why? } same root.

In the following text, several words have been taken out. But they are all derived from the same root (e.g. kind – kindly – kindness – unkind, etc.) Read the text carefully and try to supply the missing words.

Automation and computers

Ever since the beginning of time man has made tools. At first they were very primitive ones of stone; later bronze was used, and then men learned to work with iron. But however much tools were improved, man still had to use his hands. Nails had to be hammered in, wood carved, and stone chipped. Every table, every pair of shoes and every yard of cloth was made by [] and trained labour.

When, at the end of the eighteenth century, steam was used to drive machinery and it was found that, for instance, cotton could be spun by a machine, the need for so much [] labour declined. The labour force was divided into a small, [] section and the vast mass of [] and [] .

In the present age we see machinery beginning to perform what used to be done by the [] . We can see how this works if we take a motor-car as an example. When they were first manufactured at the beginning of this century, each part was separately made and then assembled by [] engineers. The first step was made when the complicated process was broken up into separate parts, and each part done by a machine. If you had gone into a factory in Coventry forty years ago you would have seen men (and women) standing in front of a moving belt, and automatically dropping a nail in a hole as it came by. Or else, perhaps, a man would have to give a turn to a screw as it passed him. This work was deadly monotonous and required little [] . Now machines are undertaking this, dropping in the nail and turning the screw. There is much less need for the [] labour which used to make up about eighty per cent of the labour force of every factory.

Not only are machines undertaking the work of the [] . They are themselves being controlled by electronic computers. These are electric brains, which are so [] and intricately designed that they can start an operation, check it, correct an error, and register measurements. It is easy to see one effect of all this. What is to happen to the workers in a factory run by automation? For instance, in 1963 a factory was built in Kent which cost £2,000,000, but it is operated by exactly seven employees. In a motor-car factory, in 1965, 555 things are done to a cylinder block by a continuous automated process.

Automation does not only invade the factory it is also making a revolution in offices. Computers can do calculations in half an hour which it might take a mathematician or an accountant two years to work out. Many offices have installed computers to do work which was once done by clerks.

More highly trained scientists are needed to design the new devices, more engineers to make and service them, and fewer [] workers to do mechanical tasks.

(From *Britain in the Modern World*, by E. N. Nash and A. M. Newth)

Exercise 7

Specific aim: } Same as for exercise 5 but this time about one
Skills involved: } word out of eight has been taken out of the text
Why? } and must be deduced by the students.

Read the following text and complete the blanks with the words which seem most appropriate to you.

What is apartheid?

It is the policy of Africans inferior, and separate from Europeans.

..... are to be kept separate by not being to live as citizens with rights in towns. They may go to European towns to, but they may not have their families; they must live in 'Bantustans', the areas. They are not to with Europeans by in the same cafés, waiting-rooms, of trains, seats in parks. They are not to from the same beaches, go to the cinemas, play on the same game-..... or in the same teams.

Twelve per cent of the is left for the Africans to live and on, and this is mostly dry,, mountainous land. the Africans are three-quarters of the people. They are to go and work for the Europeans, not because their lands do not enough food to keep them, but also they must money to pay their taxes. Each adult man has to pay £1 a year poll tax, and ten shillings a year for his hut. When they into European areas to work are not allowed to do work; they are hewers of wood and drawers of water, and their is about one-seventh of what a European earn for the same of work.

If a European and African to do skilled work of the kind for Europeans, as carpentry, both the European and his employee may be fined £100. Any African who takes part in a strike may be £500, and/or sent to for three years.

(From *Britain in the Modern World*, by E. N. Nash and A. M. Newth)

Here are the answers as an indication:

keeping – they – allowed – European – work – there – native – mix – sitting – compartments – bathe – same – fields – land – farm – poor – yet – forced – only – grow – because – earn – African – tax – go – they – skilled – wage – would – kind – employs – reserved – such – African – fined – prison

An easier version of this exercise, which can be useful in preliminary training exercises, involves taking out a few words

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from the text and proposing a choice between three or four possibilities for each of these words.

e.g.

It is the policy of keeping Africans 1....., and separate from Europeans.

They are to be kept separate by not being 2..... to live as citizens with rights in 3..... towns. They 4..... go to European towns to 5....., but they may not have their families

..... 6.....; they must live in 'Bantustans', the 7..... areas.

They are 8..... to 9..... with Europeans by sitting in 10..... cafés, waiting-rooms, compartments of trains, seats in parks.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1 a) superior
b) inferior
c) equal | 5 a) work
b) live
c) drink | 9 a) play
b) mix
c) talk |
| 2 a) obliged
b) encouraged
c) allowed | 6 a) working
b) there
c) at home | 10 a) the same
b) other
c) the black |
| 3 a) British
b) African
c) European | 7 a) European
b) native
c) white | |
| 4 a) cannot
b) may
c) should | 8 a) sometimes
b) often
c) not | |

Exercise 8

Specific aim: To train the students to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words by asking them to do a cloze exercise in their native language before doing one in English.

Skills involved: Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items through contextual clues.

Why? Most students could infer the meaning of unfamiliar words much more quickly if they only realized this is something they already do all the time in their native language.

One way of making them conscious of this is to give them first a short cloze test in their native language. Most students will have no difficulty in guessing the meaning of the missing words and in understanding the gist of the passage.

I Reading techniques

After this has been done, the students can be given a short text in English, in which the same proportion of words as in the first text has been taken out. But this time, the words have been replaced by imaginary words, or very difficult ones, which they obviously do not know. In many cases, the students will stumble on these unfamiliar words which may even prevent them from understanding what the passage is about.

Comparing these two exercises may be useful to show the students that they *are* able to understand a lot if they do not allow themselves to be discouraged by a few difficulties.

(About one word out of eight has been taken out in each text.)

- 1 Read the following text and fill the blanks with the words which seem most appropriate to you.

Le 26 mai, pour peu que les conditions s'y prêtent, dix-sept ballons représentant dix différents de Long-Beach, en Californie, pour participer à 1979 de la légendaire épreuve de ballons la Coupe Gordon-Bennett. Après quarante années dues d'abord à la guerre, puis à l'irréremédiable des « plus légers que l'air », la Coupe Gordon-Bennett, en 1906 par le fondateur de l'« International Herald Tribune », en effet de ses cendres. Un qui, à l'époque des long-courriers supersoniques et de la en place de stations orbitales, bien quelques commentaires.

(*Le Monde*)

- 2 The following text contains a number of imaginary words. Can you guess their meaning?

TRAIN DERAILED

Plicks are believed to have caused the dolling of a two-car diesel passenger train yesterday. The train, with 24 biners on board, hit a metal object and ratted 100 yards of track before stopping four pars from Middlesbrough. Three people were taken to hospital, one slightly rapped, the others tinding from shock.

(*The Daily Telegraph*)

Exercise 9

- Specific aim:* To train the students to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and to help them to analyse their process of inference.
- Skills involved:* Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items through contextual clues.
Understanding relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices.
- Why?* The main purpose of this exercise is to develop in the students the ability to analyse their own process of inference. Such an analysis should make them conscious of how they can deal with an unfamiliar word and make them ready to use the different techniques of inference more quickly and efficiently.

Nobody's watching me

I am a foot taller than Napoleon and twice the weight of Twiggy; on my only visit to a beautician, the woman said she found my face a *challenge*. Yet despite these social disadvantages I feel cheerful, happy, confident and secure.

I work for a daily newspaper and so get to a lot of places I would otherwise never see. This year I went to Ascot to write about the people there. I saw something there that made me realize the stupidity of trying to conform – of trying to be better than anyone else. There was a small, *plump* woman, all *dressed up* – huge hat, dress with pink butterflies, long white gloves. She also had a *shooting-stick*. But because she was so plump, when she sat on the stick it went deep into the ground and she couldn't pull it out. She *tugged* and *tugged*, tears of rage in her eyes. When the final *tug* brought it out, she crashed with it to the ground.

I saw her walk away. Her day had been ruined. She had made a fool of herself in public – she had impressed nobody. In her own sad, red eyes she was a *failure*.

I remember well when I was like that, in the days before I learned that nobody really cared what you do . . .

I remember the pain of my first dance, something that is always meant to be a wonderful occasion for a girl . . . There was a fashion then for diamanté ear-rings, and I wore them so often practising for the big night that I got two great *sores* on my ears and had to put sticking-plaster on them. Perhaps it was this that made nobody want to dance with me. Whatever it was, there I sat for four hours and 43 minutes. When I came home, I told my parents that I had a marvellous time and that my feet were *sore* from dancing. They were pleased at my success and they went to bed happy, but I went to my room and tore the bits of sticking-plaster off my ears and felt *forlorn* and *disconsolate*.

(Adapted from an article in *The Listener* by Maeve Binchy)

I Reading techniques

Read the whole text first, then look at the words which are italicized and try to guess their meaning from the context. The following types of relation between the word and the context may help you:

- equivalence: a synonym is mentioned in the text.
- contrast: the word means the contrary of another word or expression given in the text.
- cause: the meaning of the word can be guessed because it is the cause of something described in the text.
- consequence: the word describes or appears in the description of the consequence of something. If the cause is known, it may be possible to guess what the consequence is.
- purpose: the word applies to an object whose purpose is described in the text.
- explanation/illustration: the meaning of the word is explained or an example is given.
- generalization/specification: the word is just one specific instance of a more general thing or idea mentioned in the text, or, on the contrary, after a number of specific examples have been given, a generalization is made.

When you have finished, complete the table opposite.

Exercise 10

Specific aim: To train the students to read faster and to recognize words more quickly.

Skills involved: Inferring the meaning of incomplete words.
Predicting.

Why? This is an activity that we are constantly led to practise, even in our native language: when we receive a letter which is difficult to read because of the handwriting, or when a document has been damaged and some of the words are not legible. In order to reconstruct the words, it is necessary to study what we can see of them in order to predict what letters are likely to be missing, and/or to study the context in order to infer the general meaning of the words. This is usually done very fast and almost unconsciously in our first language, and the aim of this exercise is to train the students to do the same thing in a foreign language. More generally, even when dealing with perfectly legible texts, it should also help the students to recognize words more quickly and therefore to read faster.

Here is a possible way of completing the table.

	Equivalence	Contrast	Cause	Consequence	Purpose	Explanation Illustration	Generalisation Specification
challenge		face = a challenge get / feel happy ⇒ something negative					face = a challenge kill social disad- vantages → a disadvantage something unpleasant
plump			plump → stick went deep into ground ⇒ heavy, fat				
dressed up						all dressed up - huge hat...dressed with...jokes with musical or cultural references	
shooting stick					she sat on the stick → a stick you can sit on		
tugged/tug	pull → tug ⇒ pull		tug → brings stick out ⇒ pull				
failure				foot of herself -implied nobody → a failure ⇒ no good			
sores/sore			sore (= sticking plaster) → nobody wants to dance ⇒ something unpleasant	wearing car-rings often → sore dancing a lot → sore feet → infections/painful			
forlorn disconsolate		happy ≠ disconsolate ⇒ unhappy					

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1 You live in Boston and you are in the train on the way to West Concord to visit a friend. It is dark outside and you want to know where you are. It is not easy to read the names of the stations as you cannot always see the whole name. When you see the following signs, can you tell what stations you are passing? (See Davies and Whitney, *Reasons for Reading*, p. 15).

I	N	O	L	
R	T	S	A	R
A	R	L	E	
U	T	A	T	O

 : -----
 : -----
 : -----
 : -----

Did you manage to get off in South Concord?
Here are the stations on the line:

Saturdays Only

Leave	ARRIVE:				Brandeis/Roberts	Kendal Green	Lincoln	Concord	West Concord	South Acton
Boston North Station	Porter Square	Belmont Center	Waverley	Wal-tham						

2 You are in a second-hand bookshop, looking at old books. Some of them are in a rather bad state and parts of the words on the covers have disappeared.


Can you tell what the titles of the following books are?

- a) The adventures of Robinson Crusoe.
- b) The mystery of the old castle.
- c) How to build your own house.
- d) A new English grammar.


3 You have just received this postcard. Unfortunately it is raining hard and some or parts of the words have disappeared. Can you guess what was written?

Hi!

Here I am in
love. Cambridge is
lovely these old
colleges and
king on the river
Duke of me and
enjoy your
looking forward
to see you.
Lots of kisses
Jerry xx



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Inference: Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items through understanding word formation

Exercise

Specific aim: To train the students to recognize word formation and derivation.

Skills involved: Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items through understanding word formation.

Why? Being aware of how words are formed and of the value of prefixes and suffixes will help the students to discover the meaning of a great number of unfamiliar words.

See text on pages 28–9.

- a) Two words with the suffix ‘-ible’ appear in the text. What are they? What effect does the suffix have on the meaning of the word? Can you think of other words formed in the same way?
- b) Underline the suffixes in the following words:
 - hypnotist
 - predictable
 - beautiful
 - apparently
 - observation
 - Can you guess the meaning of each of the suffixes?
 - Can you think of other words formed with the same suffixes?
- c) Find two words with a prefix in the text:
 - Define the value of each prefix.
 - One of them is used to make a word negative. What prefix would you add to each of these adjectives/nouns in order to make them negative?
 - predictable:.....
 - trained:.....
 - organization:.....
 - ability:.....
- d) At the beginning of the text, you can find the word ‘hypnotist’.
 - Can you find another word formed in the same way?
 - At the end of the text you can also find the corresponding adjective, ‘hypnotic’. Can you complete the following table with the appropriate words, bearing in mind that these words do not all appear in the text, that the word-formation may not be the same for all of them and that some boxes may remain empty.

<i>noun</i>	<i>adjective</i>	<i>person</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>adverb</i>
hypnosis hypnotism	hypnotic	hypnotist hypnotizer	hypnotize	hypnotizingly
		employer		

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<i>noun</i>	<i>adjective</i>	<i>person</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>adverb</i>
	psychological			
science				
	free			

- e) Look at the following words and find what the root of each of them is. Then build as many words as you can from that root.
- presumably
 - uncovering
 - followers
 - observation

Inference – further hints

One useful exercise involves giving the class a short passage to read and asking them to underline all the words they do not understand. Then the whole class can consider each of these words and see how much they can guess about them. The following steps can be taken to help the students during the exercise:

- look at what can be guessed from the word itself. (Is it a noun, a verb, an adjective? Can its form help?)
- look at the context. (Is the word repeated anywhere else? Is there any contrast or analogy that can help you derive the meaning of the word?)
- try to make a guess even if it is a vague one.

1.2 Understanding relations within the sentence

Exercise 1

Specific aim: To help the students to recognize the structure of complex sentences.

Skills involved: Understanding relations within the sentence.

Why? In order to read efficiently and not to stumble on every word it will be essential for the students to grasp the structure of the sentences they read at once. They should therefore be taught to discriminate quickly between what is essential (subject – verb – object, i.e. the ‘core’ of the sentence) and the padding (i.e. modifiers, relative clauses, oppositions, etc.) which, in each sentence, only introduces some further details or qualifies the idea.