
UNIT 3 APPLICATION OF TEXT ANALYSIS TO TEACHING THE FOUR LANGUAGE SKILLS

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

Our aim in this Unit is to help you create interesting activities/exercises for your own students using the discourse perspective. We have given you several cues and suggestions which you could adapt in your context. Our concentration in this Unit is on the skills of Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking. We have also enunciated the sub-skills of all the skills so you can help your students develop adequate strategies.

Our aim in this Unit, therefore, will be to

- understand the purpose of teaching the four skills of Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking;
- analyse the sub-skills involved in both comprehension (for Reading – Listening) and production (for Writing – Speaking); and
- give you hints to the exercise types that you may use in the classroom with your students.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The introduction of text analysis in Units 1 and 2 would have prepared you for the next task which is practical, and has immediate application to classroom teaching. Text analysis will have enabled you to see that the teaching of grammar and vocabulary, as such, is not sufficient for language learning. Language learning requires exposure to and use of language in context and language in chunks, as under normal conditions of use. This means that the ability to produce and process language and thus command of the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking becomes crucial in order to use language in authentic contexts. We will now analyse the different aspects of the four skills and consider possible techniques for teaching these.

3.2 APPROACHES TO TEACHING

As we have seen, Text Analysis releases us from the bondage of the sentence and the exclusive concern with grammatical patterning. In the wide open spaces now available to us, we not only have the text with its own internal system of organisation, but also the social context in which the text takes shape, and the psychological processes of encoding by the speaker/writer as well as the processes of decoding by the listener/reader. Interactivity is the key word over here, for we are concerned mainly with communication, and with making sense, and not merely with grammatical correctness. Thus, the nature of the background information available, and presuppositions of both speaker and listener become crucial, as also the mental models constructed by each participant in the interaction. As there is no restriction on the topics that may be considered, or to the operations that the mind can perform on the topic, the level of abstractness/concreteness can vary, and the mental operations may consist of, among others, analysis, interpretation, comparison, definition and so on.

Each teaching exercise will be concerned with the overall aim of developing communication skills in English, and the specific aim of developing one aspect of one skill in particular.

We shall start with comprehension, and lead on to production. As you go through the types of skills, with suggested exercises, we would like you to

- 1) consider if there are any other sub-skills you would like to add. If so, note them down promptly. Check back later if they are in fact different, and if so in what respect.
- 2) also note down any other teaching exercises or modifications of these that occur to you.
- 3) look at other teaching materials, starting with the recommended list, and moving on to any others that you can lay your hands on, to draw out other suitable exercises.
- 4) analyse these exercises and assess their usefulness in the classroom.

3.3 READING AND LISTENING: COMPREHENSION SKILLS

3.3.1 Comprehension Purposes

Before analysing the nature of the individual skills, let us first consider the general purpose that can be considered to underlie comprehension. We are concerned with real life purposes and not made-up classroom purposes.

The following would seem to be the major purposes that motivate reading/listening:

- 1) To understand someone's feelings
- 2) To be entertained or stimulated emotionally
- 3) To acquire information
- 4) To find out about the point of view or experience of others

- 5) To review or refine one's understanding
- 6) To appreciate the writer's/ speaker's craft.

If these are accepted as the major purposes of reading/listening, then it would appear that we should try to gear our comprehension courses to develop the skills required to fulfill these purposes.

- 1) To understand someone's feeling, the reader/listener must be sensitive to the nuances of expression, tone, attitude, must be able to read between the lines, must not be blocked by cross-cultural differences, or varying presuppositions or background information.
- 2) To be entertained or stimulated emotionally, the content of the communication is important. It must be relevant to one's needs, and must fulfill the basic requirements of good communication.
- 3) To acquire information, one must learn how to focus on what is important; distinguish between major and minor points, ideas, etc.
- 4) To find out about the view point or experience of others, one has to distinguish between facts and attitudes/view points, to analyse and interpret text.
- 5) To review or refine one's understanding, it is necessary to learn how to acquire the type of information one wants, to analyse, interpret, infer, evaluate that information.
- 6) To appreciate the writer's/speaker's craft, the skill of verbal expression needs to be understood.

As we have seen, a variety of skills is required in order to fulfill the purposes most individuals have for reading/listening. In addition to these, there are a number of other skills, which underlie these or else are also required to facilitate better comprehension. Alderson (1984) raised the question, 'Is reading a language problem or a reading problem? which is pertinent to the skill of comprehension. We have to be concerned with aspects of both the language which is used in communication, as well as the skills of comprehension.

3.3.2 Analysis of Some Sub-skills of Reading and Listening

Leaving the language aspects aside for the moment, can we break down the global notion of comprehension skills into specific skills of comprehension? What are these? The following would appear to be the major sub-skills of comprehension:

- A) The mechanics of reading/listening**
- B) Making sense (assigning meaning to phrases/sentences)**
- C) Reading for information, opinion, attitude.**

These major sub-skills could then be further sub-divided into component sub-skills:

A) The Mechanics of Reading/Listening

- 1) Decoding print/phonology/intonation patterns
- 2) Fluency in handling orthography/phonology
- 3) Variable purpose eye movement: skimming, scanning, close reading

B) Making sense (assigning meaning to phrases/sentences)

- 1) Anticipating syntactic and semantic categories. Deducing meaning from context. Registering cohesive links and recognising discourse patterns. (grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, discourse patterning)
- 2) Perceiving the sequence of ideas; the relationship between different ideas; organising and classifying facts
- 3) Understanding and interpreting non-verbal information—maps, charts, graphs, etc. Relating, converting non-verbal information to verbal information

C) Reading for information, opinion, attitude

- 1) Getting the general idea of what is being said; overview
- 2) Getting the gist of the communication. Separating the main idea from related details - summarising
- 3) Extracting specific information
- 4) Predicting what will come next; outcomes
- 5) Noting discrepancies between different statements, deciding, distinguishing fact from opinion
- 6) Inferring opinion and attitude
- 7) Reading for appreciation

The following is a further analysis of these component sub-skills and some suggestions about how to develop them in the classroom.

3.3.3 Further Analysis of the Component Sub-skills

A) The Mechanics of Reading/Listening

i) Reading:

Decoding print/handwriting. Understanding format

Whole word reading; reading for visual patterns; spelling; punctuation

Eye span increase; movement of eyes on the page

Reading in meaningful units

ii) Listening:

Retaining chunks of language of different lengths for short periods

Discriminating between the distinctive sounds of the target language, particularly between commonly confused phonological units

Becoming aware of word boundaries, other grammatical boundaries

Sound-symbol correspondence; relationship between sound patterns and grammatical patterns; listening in meaningful units

Recognising the stress patterns of words

Decoding intonation patterns

Teaching Exercises

We have given you information on the mechanics of reading/listening. We give below some exercises which you could try out in the classroom.

- 1) **i) Finding patterns in orthography; in spelling; in larger formats,**
e.g. a letter as opposed to a report.

Ask students to identify specific patterns in text(s) and relate them to sound e.g. spelling patterns to their corresponding sound patterns; or other visual/orthographic patterns to meaning, e.g. the article 'a' as seen in its various occurrences. Learning to read by visual patterning 'whole words' rather than by learning each letter of the alphabet separately. Learning how to read whole words has the advantage of dealing with a meaningful unit; learning individual letters of the alphabet is a much more abstract activity. **This activity you could try out in the primary classes.**

- ii) Finding patterns in language sounds**

- a) In a passage that is read out, e.g. the 'shn' sound in '-tion', '-sion' (attention, extension) and then linking these with the meaning
- b) In order to acquire a sense of **word boundaries**, get students to distinguish whatever words they can from the flow of speech. Let them listen to the same passage spoken at different speeds, and pick out words they can distinguish. Let them do this in pairs, with each member of the pair performing in turn.

- 2) **Use speed reading/chunk listening techniques to simultaneously increase speed and comprehension**

- i) Eye span increases by reading in meaningful units.** Break up a paragraph into phrases/clauses and put each phrase/clause on a separate line. Give students practice in seeing each of these in one eye movement, pausing only at the end of the line. Increase the length of the line by using a larger unit of grammar.
- ii) Training the eye to move swiftly** left to right and top to bottom, picking up whatever comes along the way. Pick up one key word per line; move the eye down a paragraph rapidly, keeping the eye on the centre of the first line down through to the centre of the last line, taking in what information it can through peripheral vision.
- iii) Oral memory** increases by listening to a passage read in chunks, consisting of specific phrases/clauses, e.g. An earthquake strikes without warning/when it does/its power is immense...

- iv) **Listening only for key words:** for particular grammatical units; for specific information (later being checked for what else the student remembers (peripheral listening).
- v) **Recognising the odd man out** in vowels/consonants in single words; in differential stress used to mark nouns from verbs in sentences, e.g. He remained a ‘rebel all his life (‘rebel: noun; stress on first syllable). He continued to rebel all his life (rebel: verb; stress on second syllable).
- vi) **Decoding intonation patterns.** This is very important in terms of understanding tone and attitude; politeness or the lack of it; shades of meaning. Listening to recorded speech and trying to isolate instances of politeness/rudeness.

3) **Developing fluency in handling orthography/phonology**

Reading for fluency/listening to language spoken at its normal pace. Being able to cope with less than full understanding. One of the ways to develop fluency is to guess at the meaning of unfamiliar words. This is meant to encourage weaker students who tend to read slowly and never skim through a text because they think there is too much they do not understand. The idea is to show them that even a few words understood here and there can be enough to understand what the passage is about. In fact, it is what often happens when we run our eyes over a text to get the gist of it.

For example consider the following exercise. You are skimming through an article in which most of the words are unknown to you. Here are the ones you can understand, however

professor

Institute of Biochemistry

hard-working man

results of experiments

published

confession

invention

different results

fraud

regrets it

Can you guess, from these few words, if the article is about:

“ a well-known professor who has just published his confessions”

“ a scientist who has admitted inventing the results of his experiments”

“ a scientist who has killed himself because he couldn’t get the same results as everybody else”

“ a scientist who regrets the publication of the results of his experiments”.

(from Grellet, 1980)

4) i) **Variable purpose eye movement: Skimming, scanning, close reading**

Practice in skimming to get an overview, scanning for specific information, and close reading.

- a) **Scanning:** Try the following exercise. When looking at a text for the first time ask the students not to read it, but merely to mark out in words which recur, along with the number of times they occur. If, for example, in a particular passage the recurrent words are young, old man/men, friends(s), ask them what insights they have derived about the passage from this. Is the passage likely to deal with a comparison between old and young men? Let them then read the passage to find out if they were right in their surmises. The passage in question is as follows:

‘Some of Naseeruddin’s old friends were talking about the young people of their town. Then one of the old men said, ‘But young men are stronger than old then’.

All of them agreed that this was so, except Naseeruddin. He said, ‘No. I am as strong now as when I was a young man.’ ‘How is that possible?’ asked his friend. ‘Well,’ said Naseeruddin, ‘in one of my fields there is a rock. When I was a young man, I used to try to move it, but I couldn’t because I was not strong enough. I am an old man now, and when I try to move it, I still cannot.’

Making students aware of their own strategies in reading

Get them to introspect on what they are doing when they are reading a text. How do their eyes move – word by word, line by line, or in a zigzag pattern? Do they turn back to something already read, which they now feel they can’t understand? When do the eyes pause; how often do they pause? and what happens when they pause? Consciousness of their own reading strategies can be one way of moving them into the use of more efficient strategies. Guidance on how to develop efficient reading strategies can be procured from any book on speed reading.

Variable purpose listening: for overview, detail, specific information

Listening to recorded announcements and drawing out only the information required, e.g. the status of the train you are travelling on.

B) Making sense (assigning meaning to phrases/sentences)

This implies inculcating an awareness of the form, organisation through which the content is expressed.

- i) Recognising basic grammatical patterning and punctuation.
- ii) Awareness of word formation patterns and ability to distinguish between different semantic fields.
- iii) Anticipating syntactic and semantic categories.
- iv) Awareness of the use of cohesive links.

- v) Perceiving patterns in discourse: sequencing, comparison contrast, classification, argumentation, ability to analyse the types of relationships being forged, organising and classifying information
- vi) Understanding and interpreting non-verbal information – maps, charts, graphs, etc. Relating, converting non-verbal information to verbal.

Teaching exercises

1) Knowledge of basic grammatical patterning and punctuation

- a) **Punctuation and its relationship to meaning.** Inserting punctuation marks in a passage where the use of punctuation/different punctuation/ no punctuation affects meaning. Analysing the differences these introduce in the meaning of the passage.
- b) **Understanding the difference in information focusing and emphasis brought in by the subordination and coordination** of clauses in a sentence. Analysing two passages which differ only in terms of subordination and coordination patterns.
- c) **Analysing the effect of different sentence types, and the positioning of adverbials** and other words in a sentence, as for example in the following:

I saw the big, black dog here again yesterday.
Yesterday I saw the big, black dog here again.
It was the big, black dog that I saw here again yesterday.
It was yesterday that I saw the big, black dog here again.
What I saw here again yesterday was the big, black dog.

2) Knowledge of word formation patterns and ability to distinguish between different semantic fields

- a) **Crossword puzzles to improve spelling, vocabulary recall**
- b) **Understanding the connections between words in the same semantic range in a passage.** Being aware that such connections exist, and looking for them in a text is important in developing a strategy of inference.

Consider the following exercise:

Reading the text a second time to find all the words related to particular ideas. In the example given below, the idea chosen is *dependence/independence*. The task is to find words related in meaning to these words in the given passage, and then to fill in this information in a table, such as the following

	Nouns	Adjectives	Verbs
dependence e.g.	slaves	insecure	
independence			

(Grellet, p.29-30)

Can you think of other words to complete the table?

Let's look at another example:

Read the following paragraph and pick out words that suggest the idea of largeness:

It was a turtle, an upside-down turtle lying on its back on the sand. But what a turtle it was! It was a giant, a mammoth. I had not thought it possible for a turtle to be as enormous as this. It was perhaps five feet long and four feet across: with a high-domed shell of great beauty.

(from *Routes to English*, Orient Longman, Reader 8)

- c) **Recognising equivalence and the use of general words to cover more specific ones** (hyponymy). Identifying instances of synonymy, antonym, markers of equivalence, words which introduce examples, rephrasing of the same idea, an equivalent expression, general words to cover more specific ones.

You could give a suitable passage and ask the following questions:

- i) Find at least one instance of synonymy
- ii) Find at least one instance of antonym
- iii) Find at least three markers of equivalence
- iv) Which of these words introduce(s)
 - an example:
 - a rephrasing of what has been said before:
 - an equivalent expression:

(Grellet, p. 30-31)

- d) **Inferring the meaning of unfamiliar/incomplete words**

Reading the whole text, looking at certain words and guessing their meaning from the context. The relationship between the word and context is given (e.g. equivalence: a synonym is mentioned in the text; contrast: the word means the contrary of another word or expression given in the text)

- e) **Drawing out expressions which are equivalent in a text** and isolating the expressions that are used to express this equivalence (Grellet, p.31-2).

Presented in tabular form:

Quotation from text	Word which is explained	Explanation (equivalence)	Device used
e.g. in addition, the concept has been criticized as being tautological – that is, circular in its reasoning – and we should examine that accusation.	tautological	Circular in its reasoning	Explicit marker 'that is' and hyphenation

f) Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items through understanding word formation (Grellet, p.41)

You could train your students by giving an appropriate passage and asking the following type of questions:

- i) Two words with the suffix - 'ible' appear in the text. What are they? Can you think of other words in the same way?
- ii) Underline the suffixes in the following words:
 - psychologist
 - wondrous
 - spoonful
 - softly
 - observation

Can you guess the meaning of each of the suffixes?

Can you think of other words formed with the same suffixes?

- iii) 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?
 - print
 - trained
 - organization
 - ability

g) At the beginning of the text, you can find the word 'psychologist'

- Can you find another word formed in the same way?
- Can you complete the following table with the appropriate words?

Noun	Adjective	Person	Verb	Adverb
Hypnosis	Hypnotic	Hypnotist	Hypnotize	Hypnotizingly
Psychology	Psychological	Psychologist		
Hypnotism		Hypnotizer		
		Employer		
Science				
	Free			

3) Anticipating syntactic and semantic categories

This can be done by deducing meaning from context, registering cohesive links and recognising discourse patterns.

4) Knowledge of cohesive links

It is obvious that *all* the words and structures used in a particular text play a role in creating a meaningful discourse. But there are some words that play a crucial role in connecting sentences together. This linking of sentences is known as **cohesion**. Given below is a list of cohesive devices that we are going to discuss and structure words that operate in them.

i) **Definite Reference:**

a) **Personal reference:**

personal pronouns (**I, we, you, he, she, it, they**), possessive pronouns (**mine, yours**, etc.) and the determiners (**my, your**, etc.)

b) **Demonstrative reference: this/that, these/those**, used either as pronouns or as determiners, the article **the**, and the adverbs **here** and **there**.

ii) **Linkage:**

a) **Coordinating conjunctions: and, or, but, neithernor**, etc.

b) **Linking adverbials: for, so yet, however, meanwhile, for example**, etc.

Let's try to differentiate between Reference and Linkage.

Reference, as you already know, is a device which indicates that 'the same person or object' is being referred to in different parts of a text, i.e. in the preceding or the following text. Reference basically involves either a repeated reference to a person or object, or a repetition of a meaning (extended reference).

Linkage, on the other hand, is not a device to identify items in the preceding or the following text. It is primarily a way of signalling how one idea leads on to another. The words and phrases which have this connecting function are like signposts on a journey. They generally come at the beginning of a sentence.

a) **Understanding the use of reference (Grellet, p.46)**

In a paragraph given, referential relations are indicated by the use of underlining in the first few lines. Use the same procedure in the rest of the text. Example:

One day the good journal announced a special offer of eight thousand rupees. It excited Rama Rao's vision of a future tenfold. He studied the puzzle. There were only four doubtful corners in it, and he might have to send in at least four entries. A large outlay was indicated. 'You must give me five rupees this time'; he said to his wife, at which that good lady became speechless. He had become rather insensitive to such things these days, but even he could not help feeling the atrocious nature of his demand....

(From 'Out of Business' by R. K. Narayan, in *An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories*, Indian Thought Publications).

Structure word	Grammatical category	Refers to
1) It (2nd sentence)	Personal pronoun	A special offer
2) He (3rd sentence)	Personal pronoun	Rama Rao
3) it (4th sentence)	Personal pronoun	The puzzle
4) he (4th sentence)		

- b) **Use of link words.** The link words in a passage are italicised/underlined. They have to be replaced by other link words, or the sentences have to be rewritten, making sure that the meaning remains the same.
- c) **Tracing lexical relationships in text.** Awareness of how often a particular lexical item occurs in a text, and ways in which it is replaced (by pronouns, substitution, ellipsis)
- d) **Understanding the organisation of a discursive passage,** i.e. observing the relations between the different parts of the text and the cohesive links which signal these relations. Analysis of a text and representation of the information as a table or diagram/flow chart, indicating on the chart the cohesive link which signals this relation.
- e) **A more complex handling of the same.** The link words in a passage are removed, and in addition, the sentences are jumbled. All you know is that a given set of points occur in the text in a particular order (given), and that a given list of link words is to be inserted in appropriate places. Reconstructing a passage from these specifications. Example (a slightly simpler one)

The following sentences go together to form a story but they are in the wrong order. Working in groups of two or three, put them in the right order, and decide how the words and phrases in bold type help to link the text together. Then compare your answers with those of other groups.

- i) **But** the strange thing is that nobody seems to live there.
- ii) **It** is a large two-storey house with an ample garden.
- iii) I don't like to stand **there and stare in**, but even a quick glance tells you that everything is **perfectly kept**.
- iv) **Or is it?**
- v) Along the street from where I live is a house that is something of a mystery.
- vi) But no one that I know **can**.
- vii) **The** garden is neat and tidy, and **the** house itself is freshly painted and clean.
- viii) Perhaps the people who live opposite could clarify **the point**.
- ix) From when **they** leave until **their** next visit, the house is completely empty.
- x) This is surrounded by a high wall, and the only spot where you can see inside is the gate.

- xi) The only people you ever see are the gardener and the house-keeper, who come early in the morning two or three times a week, and go away in the late afternoon.

(From Coe, N. et al. 1983)

f) Marking out the cohesive links in the given passage:

He came home laden with roses. Nevertheless, he was still somewhat in fear of his wife's reaction to his unexplained absence. Would she look at the roses and forget everything else? What if she didn't? Of course, he had his story ready, but in face of an angry woman which story would hold water? Yet, she was not always unreasonable. There was he felt, still hope.

Try substituting other words for these cohesive links and see what changes in construction are required. Does any change in meaning result? For example:

Breaking down the sentences into their simplest forms and considering the differences in style and emphasis. e.g. *He came home. He was laden with roses. Nevertheless, he was still somewhat in fear. He was afraid of his wife's reaction to his unexplained absence...* Consider the degrees of simplification necessary for different audiences.

5) Knowledge of patterns of discourse: Sequencing, comparison, contrast, classification, argumentation; ability to analyse the types of relationships being forged

a) Removing irrelevancies, redundancies from text

- b) Cloze test**, i.e. a passage with every 5th, 6th or 7th word left blank, regardless of what the word might be. Students have to fill in the blanks on the basis of their overall comprehension of the text. For example:

Our house is filled with photos. They cover the walls ofkitchen, dining room and den. see our family's entire history, with my wedding, continuing throughbirths of both sons, buying home, family gatherings and vacations.my sons were little, they to pose. They waved, danced,trees, batted balls, hung upsidefrom the jungle gym and anything for a picture. Butthey reached adolescence, picture-taking changedsomething they barely tolerated. Theirwere growing at haphazard speeds. they stood with us ortheir grandparents at birthday celebrationssmiled weakly at the cameraas short a time as possible.

- c) Dictation given at normal speaking pace.** Students have been found to write down only what they have been able to understand, and therefore absorb.

- d) Filling in gaps (words, phrases, information) in an orally presented passage.**

- e) **Filling in whole sentences or paragraphs which are missing from a text**
- f) **Cloze Dictogloss:** Read the students a short poem, getting them to jot down the key words as they listen. Then they are each given one of the following lists: all the verbs/nouns and pronouns/all other words in the passage. Also a cloze version of the poem. Students work in groups of three having between them all the three lists. The task is to reconstruct the poem as closely as possible.
- g) **Give the topic sentence of each paragraph of a passage**, stating what expansions occur in the rest of the paragraph, and what relation these expansions have to the topic sentence (e.g. illustration, cause, detail)
- h) **Reorganizing information according to specification of rhetorical patterns:**
Introducing chronological/spatial order; cause-consequence relations; contrast-comparison, etc.
- i) **Re-ordering information to form a coherent paragraph.** (Examples can be taken from faulty student writing)
- j) **Understanding the patterning of conceptual relationships in a text**, e.g. through subordination-super ordination; idea - example; chronology; cause - effect, etc.
- k) **Understanding argument by differentiating between different stands taken**

C) **Reading for information, opinion, attitude**

Here, what is being stressed is the content of what is to be comprehended. Some teaching techniques are suggested to acquire control over the content:

- 1) **Getting the general idea of what is being said – an overview**
 - a) Topic formulation, with or without isolation of a topic sentence. Creation of the appropriate mental schemata to process the information.
 - b) Relating the incoming message to one's own background knowledge
- 2) **Getting the gist of the communication.** Separating the main idea from related details
 - a) **Separation of major from minor ideas;** separation of ideas from examples of ideas. Schematic summarisation, use of tables, charts, flow-charts, diagrams.
 - b) **Summary completion**, i.e. presenting a summary of a passage or larger text and leaving gaps for key terms/concepts to be filled in.

3) Extracting specific information

e.g. Given a travel brochure, to pick out the relevant hotels and fix an itinerary, given the budget, preferences and amount of time available to the group.

4) Anticipating/predicting what will come next; outcomes

- a) **Pre-reading questions to anticipate information.** Before reading a text, ask questions which will make students guess what is to come, thus arousing their interest. Give them first the title and ask what is likely to be the content of the passage. Also, ask general questions which have some bearing on the text. The students will bear these in mind when reading it, and this will give them a focus. Example,

The Lost Beauty of Angkor Vat

Preparation

- 1) Angkor Vat was a temple in the country known as Kampuchea. Where is Kampuchea?
- 2) What was Kampuchea's old name?
- 3) What do you think could have caused the loss of beauty of the Angkor Vat temple? Make a list of these causes.

(from Routes to English, Orient Longman)

- b) **Predicting/anticipating information from available cues; filling in gaps in the passage.**
- i) Presenting a story with gaps, asking questions about what could have happened at a particular point, proceeding with the story, then presenting another gap with questions/multiple-choice options about what could have happened in the gap.
 - ii) Reconstructing a torn newspaper report. Hand out the pieces to the students and they have to put it together like a jigsaw puzzle.
 - iii) Reconstructing a message from the radio/telephone presented with a great deal of static/cross-connections
 - iv) Reconstructing the meaning of a garbled Twitter message
 - v) Prediction from incomplete passages. e.g. 'Well, I've thought about it, and I know I ought to go and see it. It is after all one of his best films and it's only on for a few days. (Sigh). Anyway, the fact of the matter is ...

The correct continuation of the last sentence is:

- A) I just can't wait to see it.
- B) I thought it was a waste of time

- C) I just haven't got the time to spare.
- 5) **Noting discrepancies between different statements or between what is read/heard and what is known**
e.g. Comparing two newspaper reports of the same event
- 6) **Judging, weighing evidence, reconciling discrepancies, deciding, distinguishing fact from opinion**
- a) Categorising particular interactive events, such as storytelling, joking, praying, complaining, on the basis of the language used
 - b) Assigning places, persons or things to categories
 - c) Inferring the sequence between events in a story/report
- 7) **Inferring opinion and attitude**
- a) Interpreting rhythm, stress, intonation to identify information focus and emotional/attitudinal tone
 - b) Interpreting type of vocabulary, syntax used to establish tone
- 8) **Reading for appreciation**
Reading widely to be encouraged. Views on what is read can be discussed.

3.4 WRITING AND SPEAKING: PRODUCTION SKILLS

Can we break down the global notion of 'production skills' into specific skills? What are these?

I) Mechanics of speech/ writing

- 1) Learning the script through visual patterns
- 2) Fluency; appropriate pace

Non-stop speech/writing. Get students to speak individually into an audio recorder or to each other in pairs. What they say is not important - they can say anything that comes to mind, the events of the day from morning, for example. But they must not stop speaking even for a moment. If they can't think of what to say next, they should go on repeating the last word till they can think of another.

The same tactics can be applied to writing. This exercise builds confidence and is very good as a warm-up for other activities.

II) Coherence in Writing: The Organisation of Ideas

- 1) Rhetorical development
 - Temporal sequence
 - Spatial sequence/ order
 - Comparison and contrast (clarity about the points of comparison/ contrast and the grounds for comparison)

- Cause and consequence/ effect; purpose and result; hypothesis and result, problem and solution
- Reporting the views of others and stating one's own point of view

- 2) Summarizing
- 3) Degree of prominence
- 4) Precision of detail
- 5) Restatement of same idea

III) Applied Grammar: Correctness, Flexibility, Variety in Language, Editing

IV) Communication: Writing/Speaking as a Dialogic Process

V) Fantasy; Creative Thinking; Problem-solving

3.4.1 Teaching Exercises

I) We have already discussed the Mechanics of Reading/Listening. Let us look at point II in some detail.

II) Coherence in Writing: The Organisation of Ideas

1) Rhetorical Development

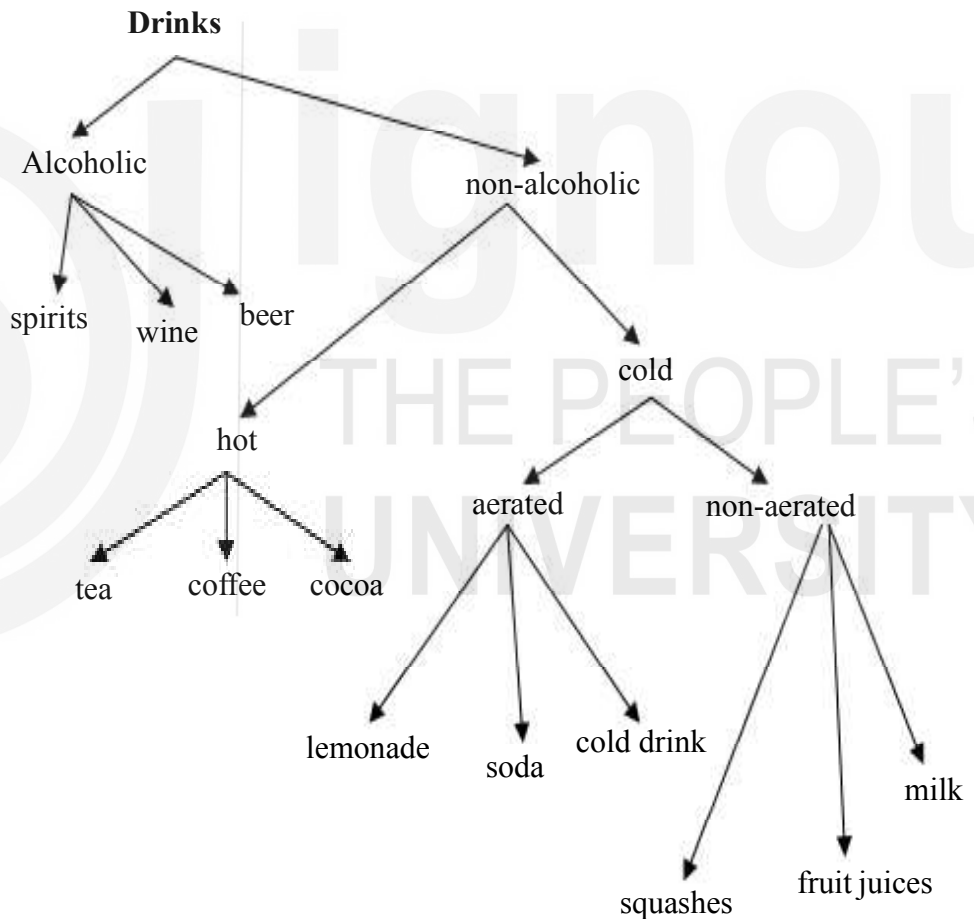
- a) Combining a given pair of sentences in order to indicate a particular kind of relationship: e.g. comparison-contrast, cause-effect, etc.
- b) Unjumbling a jumbled paragraph. Taking a paragraph and putting the sentences in jumbled order. Unjumbling involves knowledge of the rhetorical development of ideas as well as of the linguistic signals which indicate these relationships
- c) Editing unsuitable passages of student writing/ journalistic writing/ correspondence to improve the rhetorical patterning of the texts
- d) Creating a coherent passage from a collection of different bits of information
- e) Analysing a model text, exemplifying a particular discourse pattern, and writing another passage on the basis of the model
- f) Adding given pieces of information to a passage. Provide suitable additional information. Deciding where and how to insert this from the point of view of appropriate organization.
- g) Producing certain rhetorical patterns according to a (flexible) format. Examples are given of different rhetorical patterns, in which you have to fill in the blanks. e.g.

Definition: _____ is a kind of _____ (device/ form/ species/ category) which has/was meant for _____. (name, class, distinguishing features).

Classification: _____ may be divided/classified into _____ groups; those which _____ and those which _____.

Hypothesis framing: If _____ then _____ (Condition/ Circumstance leading to predicted consequence).

- h) A paragraph is presented. The student is asked to imagine the situation in which it occurs and write up a beginning and end for it.
- i) Diagrammatic display of rhetorical relationships. For example: Look at the following tree diagram: classification
- ii) What are the three criteria that are used in the classification?
- iii) Write a description of the classification of drinks based upon the information in the diagram. Begin your description: Drinks may be classified into two main groups...



Using a scale of qualification

When generalizing from data, it is possible to make the generalizations more or less precise by qualifying them. Change a factual passage into one which involves generalization, using the chart given below as a reference guide.

%AGE GUIDE	QUANTITY	FREQUENCY	PROBABILITY	VERBS
100%	all/ever/each/most/a majority of many/much a lot (of)/enough some a number (of) several a minority a few/a little few/little no/ none/ not	always usual(ly) normal(ly) general(ly) regular(ly) often frequent(ly) sometimes occasion(ly) rare(ly) seldom hardly ever scarcely ever never	certain(ly) definite(ly) undoubtedly probably/probable likely perhaps possibly/possible may be unlikely	will is/are/must have to should out to may might can could will is/are cannot could

2) Summarising for Different Purposes

Exercises:

- Writing a schematic summary, expressing the logical organisation of the passage
- Selecting relevant information from a passage/ speech and putting it in point form
- Writing the minutes of a meeting
- Taking notes from a lecture

3) Appropriate focus for major and minor ideas/examples

Exercises:

- From a given list of ideas selecting those to be given major or minor focus and constructing a passage accordingly
- Editing a given passage to provide appropriate focus

4) Degree of prominence to be given to rhetorical units/ ordering of topic and comment relations according to the purpose of writing/ speech.

Exercises:

- Interpreting passages rendered incoherent by lack of appropriate focus and rewriting these in coherent form
- Changing the format of writing, e.g. from a lecture transcript into a piece of academic prose or from a passage from a text-book into an examination answer, in order to give the appropriate focus and organisation
- Changing the topic-comment relations of individual sentences in a given passage in order to study the changes that take place in the substance of what is communicated
- Changing the order of presentation of points in order to see what changes take place in focus and prominence

5) Precision of detail and the relationship of detail to specific generalizations

Take a particular topic, e.g. ‘Heat in summer’ and come up with a number of concrete observations about it – no generalizations, only observations which are available to the senses. If there is a large list, they could be grouped into different categories. Then write up a category heading and a generalization based on that for each. Don’t use clichés in language or in thought. Try and respond to the situation as completely as possible and as if for the first time. Concreteness is perhaps even more difficult to achieve successfully than generalization.

6) Restatement of the same idea in different words for purposes of clarification/effect, while avoiding redundancy and padding.

i) Coherence in speech

Let us look at some of the activities that you could try out in your classroom.

- a) *Work in pairs.* One person from each pair is given a sentence which he has to weave into the conversation, and he has to do this so skillfully that his partner doesn’t guess what the sentence is. He has to provide a natural context for his sentence (using exactly the same form as what is given) and somehow turn the conversation in that direction. Simultaneously, his partner has his own sentence which he is trying to weave into the conversation. The one who guesses what the sentence is, wins. Some sample sentences which are difficult, but make for creative conversations, are:

Imitation is the best form of flattery

Don’t make war, make love

Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage

In the old days giraffes spouted fire

All I want is someone to love

An astrologer told me I would become Prime Minister in 2020.

(from Maley and Duff, 1978)

ii) Speech

The students work in pairs. Each pair is asked to imagine a city of the future. This city may, of course, be in space, underwater, underground, etc. They decide on the main features of this new civilization, and design signs and notices, which a visitor to the city might see. Clearly these signs will be meaningful only to the inhabitants. There should, therefore, be no recognizable words on them. About 12-15 minutes are allowed for preparation. Both partners make a copy (copies) of their signs. Now the pairs break up. Each finds a different partner. By guessing and questioning, they try to discover the meaning of each other’s signs. (Maley & Duff, 1978, 1983)

III) Applied Grammar: Correctness, flexibility, variety in language

1) Facility in producing variety in sentence structure

- a) Rewriting a paragraph, making any number of grammatical changes, with no alteration in the meaning. (The number and position of clauses/

phrases in individual sentences could change; cohesive links could change)

- b) Expansion of telegraphese/ newspaper headlines
- c) Writing on the same topic in successive class periods and then comparing changes in the drafts

2) Understanding when to use complex sentences (to subordinate one idea to others)

Editing a passage which is entirely reduced to simple sentences. Asked to introduce suitable complexity in sentence structure (subordination, coordination) in order to give the passage focus

3) How to handle given and new information: topic-comment relations

- a) Editing and rewriting a passage of student writing for better topic-comment relations, so that the passage as a whole appears more focused and clear

4) Appropriacy of lexical items. Handling paraphrase relations; synonymy; elegant variation in language; understanding the structure of affixes, compound words

- a) Editing text to learn the use of these features
- b) Replacement of phrasal verbs, for example in a passage with non-phrasal verbs

5) Appropriacy of cohesive devices: transition markers, contextual reference, ellipsis, substitution

- a) Linking sentences in appropriate pairs (from a jumbled set of sentences, using sentence connectives such as *because, however*, etc.)
- b) Editing text to achieve a smooth and connected flow

6) Learning how to signal relationships between ideas, e.g. contrast, development. When to use paragraphs

- a) Analysing a passage in terms of relationships being signaled. Writing another passage using similar signals on a different subject
- b) A passage, as well as a set of points for inclusion in it is given. Decisions have to be taken on where and how to insert these

7) Use of succinct, precise language

Summarising a phrase into a word, a clause into a phrase, one sentence for several. Choice of the right word out of several near-equivalents to be inserted in a sentence/ text.

IV) Communication: Writing/Speaking as a Dialogic Process

- 1) Writing for different types of audiences: academic, popular, technical writing
 - a) Reporting an incident for different audiences, in speech and writing
 - b) The following sentences all relate to a person who can't hear what the other is saying: The speaker and hearer and their relationship to each

other varies in each case, as seen in the language used:

'I'm sorry, I didn't catch what you said'

'Speak a little louder, can't you?'

'Could you say that again?'

'I can't hear you'

'Make yourself clear man, don't mumble.'

Imagine contexts for these sentences and provide a few lines before and after each of them. Be sure to mention the relationship between the participants in the exchange.

2) Types of presuppositions, background knowledge expected

Choose a well-known figure from literature/ film and prepare to explain to him/her why you think he/she is acting wrongly. The subject and tone will be dependent on your presuppositions about the character. State these presuppositions and put down aspects of your background knowledge about the character.

3) Appropriate levels of formality

- a) Try and put down as many words for 'Closed' as you can think of and range these on a scale of formality-informality.
- b) Hand out a few photographs of different individuals who present formal and informal appearances. Working in pairs, one student will choose a photograph whose subject s/he will impersonate, and speak through his/her voice. The partner will also have chosen a photograph and will assume that persona. The conversation will proceed as if between those two individuals in the photographs. Keeping the subject of the conversation unaltered, change the personae through the use of other photographs. Notice the changes that take place in the language and tone.

4) Use of established conventions for different types of writing

e.g. a story, a technical report, an academic article. Present the same information in these different formats.

5) Predictive and retrospective abilities in responding to information from available cues

- a) Filling in the gaps in conversation e.g. in this telephone conversation:
...He's not in, I'm afraid...No, I know it's a nuisance but he does travel a lot and...Well. I could always put you through to his assistant...Yes, I quite understand, but she does know what's going on... Ah well, that's another matter, of course. No, I doubt if she'd know about that... Why not try again tomorrow? He may pop in for a few minutes... About 9 o'clock, I should think... Yes, I'll tell him. (Maley & Duff, 1978)

- b) **Considering a discursive text as a dialogue.** With every statement being regarded as the answer to an unstated question. Taking a text and putting it into a question-answer format.

e.g. 'Whenever there is snow in England, some of the country roads may have black ice. Motorists coming suddenly upon stretches of black ice may find themselves skidding off the road. Road maintenance crews try to reduce the danger of skidding by scattering sand upon the road surfaces. Such a measure is generally adequate for our very brief snowfalls. Its main drawback is that if there are any fresh snowfalls, the whole process has to be repeated, and if the snowfalls continue, it becomes increasingly ineffective in providing some kind of grip for car tyres.'

- 1) *What happens to country roads whenever there is snow in England?*

Ans. Whenever there is snow in England, some of the country roads may have black ice.

- 2) *What problem does this give rise to for the motorist?*

Ans. Motorists coming suddenly upon stretches of black ice may find themselves skidding off the road.

- 3) *How is this problem overcome? Specifically, what do road maintenance crews do about it?*

Ans. Road maintenance crews try to reduce the danger of skidding by scattering sand upon the road surfaces.

- 4) *Does it really work? Specifically, how good/bad is such a measure?*

Ans. Such a measure is generally adequate for our very brief snowfalls. Its main drawback is that if there any fresh snowfalls, the whole process has to be repeated, and if the snowfalls continue, it becomes increasingly ineffective in providing some kind of grip for car tyres.

(Winter, 1976)

V) **Imagination**

i) **Fantasy; creative thinking; problem-solving**

- a) It is possible to build towards this by providing props. e.g. **Here is a recipe for writing a poem, a diamond-shaped one:**

First line: A noun

2nd line: Two adjectives describing the noun

3rd line: Three participles (words that end with -ing or -ed)

4th line: Four nouns related to the subject (The second two nouns may have opposite meanings from the first two)

5th line: Three participles indicating change or development of the subject

6th line: Two adjectives carrying on the idea of change or development

7th line: A noun that is the opposite of the subject.

A poem following this pattern is given below:

Galaxies
Distant, huge
Glowing, turning, going
Space, mystery, energy, life
Growing, circling, building
Tiny, basic
Atoms.

Here is a set of rules for producing another sort of poem:

1st line: A noun - a person, place or thing

2nd line: Two adjectives separated by a comma

3rd line: Three verbs that tell what the noun does. These verbs are separated by commas

4th line: A thought about your noun. A short phrase will do nicely

5th line: Repeat the word you wrote on the first line. Or a synonym or a related word.

An example of such a poem:

Skirts
Red, green
Hanging short, hanging long,
hanging just right
They have their ups and downs
Skirts

Next, try a **haiku**. The magic of a good haiku is its power of suggestion. Look for meaningful and vivid details that portray your subject. The words you choose will suggest how you feel about the subject. Here are some examples:

- Fish lie lazily
In their still home waters
Basking in shadow.
 - Goldfish in a bowl
Swimming day and night
Never arriving.
- b) **Pictures of two different games are presented. The student has to select one of these and make up the rules for playing it.**
- c) The student has to think of a complex device (e.g. Robot), only it cannot be a device already in existence. It has to be invented (e.g. an instrument for

clearing smog). A picture of the device has to be created, the parts labeled and a description provided of how it works.

- d) Creating connections in different types of material. E.g. four pictures are given to the student. There need not be much in common between them. The student has to connect them in any order preferred and make a story out of it. The place of each picture has to be clear in the story.

HOW TO MAKE USE OF THESE IDEAS:

Pick out any two exercises that excite you or that you feel you can make work in the classroom. Try these out. Record what happened in the classroom. 1) How much of classroom time was spent in you talking? 2) How much time did the students have to talk? 3) Did the less confident students speak in English at all? 4) What did you think was the learning experience?

Now do you feel like trying any more of these? Choose an area among the many dealt with that you feel like working in. Try out some exercises from that section. Discuss these with others who are offering this course. Ask the same questions to yourself as the ones given above. In addition, ask yourself if you feel that students are 1) more interested, 2) learning more. Why/ why not?

Check You Progress 1

- 1) Make a report of any of the exercises that you tried in your classroom.

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

After helping you to understand the discourse perspective, we have suggested teaching-learning activities that you could use in your classroom. These pertain to the four skills (LSRW) but are integrative in nature. We have merely given you pointers which you should develop on your own. Most of the activities pertain to reading and writing skills but can be adapted for listening and speaking skills. Do make use of this repository of exercises and tasks.

3.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

Alderson, Charles J. (1984). Reading in a Foreign Language (Applied Linguistics and Language Study) (1984-06-30), Longman Pub Group (1633)

The Nature of Text

Grellet, Franc'oise, (1981) *Developing Reading Skills: A Practical Guide to Reading Comprehension Exercises* / Cambridge, [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press,

Maley, A, & Duff, A. (1983). *Drama Techniques in Language Learning: A Resource Book of Communication Activities for Language Teachers* (Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Winter, E.O., 1976. *Fundamentals of Information Structure*. Hartfield: The Hartfield Polytechnic



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