Comprehending the Text : The Aim

of Developing Reading Skills

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Abstract

Reading of English texts seems to be very important in today's process of flowing information. Also in schools reading can be used as a major way of receiving new information. However, English teachers use this possibility only a little, evidently and mainly for ignorance of reading process substance. The focus of reading process should be understanding the written text, which means extracting the required information from the text as efficiently as possible. Therefore in reading lessons teachers should use strategies that will develop students' ability to comprehend what is read. Reading requires specific reading skills that will make you a successful reader. To avoid the superficial approach to reading skill, it is useful if the teacher gets more knowledge about the reading process.

- I. Comprehending the text
- A. Reading comprehension

Reading is one of the skills which an English teacher uses in his lesson. It is a process that leads to comprehension of some text. To be the most effective, reading lessons should use strategies that will develop a student's ability to comprehend what is read. Teacher should prepare a wide range of excercises to motivate students and make them successful readers. Experts say that teacher should know several different ways of reading and also recognize which way of reading is the best for accomplishing a reading task. When the teacher first picks up something to read, he has several basic skills, or ways of reading, to choose from. He can start either by skimming, scanning, reading for main idea and so on. It, of course, means that he knows how useful these skills are, and he mainly wants to do a reading activity by this way, although mostly it requires more teacher's work.

Reading lessons attract my attention: how to prepare a suitable text, how to motivate students, which skills and strategies to use in reading lessons for right students' comprehending. I have been teaching for four years at secondary school. Students I teach are from fourteen to eighteen years old and it means they are either beginners or of intermediate English level. For my final paper I chose the age group of seventeen—eighteen years, it means an intermediate level of English, where I practised several reading excersises, and my own experience from these reading lessons is presented in my paper.

What is, in fact, reading comprehension? In the reading process it is not important to understand everything but the

reader should be able to get the main idea and also extract specific information. Swan mentions that "If we say that a student is good at comprehension, we mean that he can read accurately and efficiently, so as to get the maximum information from a text with the minimum of misunderstanding. We may also mean (though this is not quite the same) that he is able to show his understanding by re-expressing the content of the text--for instance, by writing sentences or paragraphs in answer to questions, or by summarising the text" (Swan, 1992: 2).

B. Factors influencing students' comprehension

Success in reading comprehension is influenced by many factors. One of them is a suitable text and its language. As for choosing the text I write about it in one of the next chapters. Some reasons for failure in comprehension could be students' defective reading habits and an incorrect teacher's approach. In my opinion, not all students read efficiently—some are used to reading slowly and paying a lot of attention to individual points, some read quickly and overlook a lot of particular details, although they understand the main idea.

As regards the teacher's approach to the reading process, I think it is necessary to say that reading is very often mistaken for practising pronunciation or grammar translation. Students should not receive the idea that reading is grammar, but that one reads for information.

II. Reading skills

If the teacher decides to work on the text in his lesson, he has to think how. How to work with the text so students will get the most from it. It means that teacher should develop reading skills that help students make the best possible use of their time and their reading the most effective way. A teacher should teach his students not to read every word, which is their main mistake in reading, I think. By reading in this way they will eventually find whatever information they are looking for but this way of reading is not effective.

I have chosen several important reading skills which are used in reading process: two ways of gathering information are skimming and scanning.

According to Grellet skimming is going through the reading material quickly in order to get the gist of it, to know how it is organized, or to get an idea of the tone or the intention of the writer (Grellet, 1991a:19). You can get a general idea of the content and main ideas of each paragraphs.

Scanning, as Grellet points out, is going quickly through the text in order to find a specific piece of information (Grellet, 1991b:4). It is a rapid process in which you find specific facts, such as names, dates, sizes, distances and similar information. When the student has to find a specific fact, he must know precisely what he is looking for before he starts to scan.

The next reading skills are overviewing and previewing. Overviewing, as Shafer and McDonald write, is a quick look at the parts of a book or reading passage to see what it is about and what kinds of information can be found in it (Shafer and McDonald, 1969a:3). A reader can read the title, look at how

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the material is organized, look for an introduction or illustrations, drawings, or maps, photographs that help to understand the text. Overviewing gives a very general idea of what is in a book or a long reading passage. It does not give much specific information.

According to Shafer and McDonald previewing is a closer look at headings and text, illustrations and other aids that an author uses to show what is important in his work (Shafer and McDonald, 1969b:3). It is a thoughtful look that prepares for the important idea contained in the body of the article.

The purpose of using these skills is to obtain what you want quickly with a minimum of actual reading. But the reader needs thoughtful, careful reading for main ideas and for supporting details: for that he has to use the other reading skills. Reading for main ideas is the first step in careful reading. Students have to read each paragraph carefully and look for a sentence that expresses the meaning of the whole paragraph. They decide which sentence or paragraph expresses the main idea of the whole text and state the idea in their own words.

Reading for supporting details is connected with finding main ideas. Without supporting details many main ideas are hard to understand.

These skills are, in my opinion, the most basic reading skills the teacher uses in his lesson. I would like to point out that I use the expression "careful reading" but Grellet uses "intensive and extensive reading" (Grellet, 1991c:4).

III. Reading material

A. Choosing the suitable text

An important factor in successful comprehension is the appropriate reading text. The lack of the appropriate reading material in our schools at this time is one of the main reasons why reading does not have the emphasis it should have. The only source for many teachers and students is their textbooks and there are not always appropriate and interesting texts. But the range of the reading material can be wide. I choose the text, for example, from magazines, newspapers, cookbooks, catalogues or I use songs, advertisements, short stories, anecdotes, letters, postcards, and so on. It depends on the teacher himself if he supplements the text or not.

The chosen material should be meaningful and relevant to the students—the teacher's choices should reflect students reading ability, there should be real — life situations and the content should be informative. If I decide to use some reading text, I try to choose a text on the topic we are learning about. For example, when we are learning to describe a house and rooms, I include a text about living in Great Britain, or I try to choose a text with grammar that we are learning (e.g. if we practised past forms I chose the text where many of these forms were found).

Finally the language of that material should be real and relevant. It should not contain old - fashioned words or marked dialect. Long, complicated sentences and many new unknown words make the right comprehension difficult as well. The teacher can adapt or simplify parts that could be difficult. For instance, if students do not know anything about past perfect tense, I try to avoid it.

B. Preparing texts for individual needs

When I attempt to prepare or adapt some text following questions are considered:

- Is the topic suitable and interesting for my students?
- How to introduce the text?
- What words to present before students read the text?
- What questions and tasks to include after the text?

As the best reading strategy used in a reading lesson is recomended by experts to divide all activities into three parts a) pre - reading activity

Reading itself should start with pre - reading activities. Their aim is to prepare students' attention to the text. Teacher can prepare some activities on the basis of the text itself and students' experience. The teacher can introduce the text by pictures, puzzles, songs and so on. A very popular kind of pre - reading strategy is brainstorming, because students feel free—there are no wrong or correct answers, everything is accepted. In this part I introduce the topic, vocabulary and students' tasks. Students should know what they will look for in the text and they are posted in new vocabulary or difficult structures, so that they do not panic during reading.

b) while - reading activity

This stage includes silent reading. It is an individual activity, but students can interrupt their reading and can ask me about what is not clear enough in the text for them.

c) post - reading activity

Post - reading activities check if students have understood the text. This is the traditionally major task consisting of questions that follow the text. They can be questions or multiple - choice exercises, role - playing on the basis of the text or retelling, it can include some written task as well. It

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IV. Practical excercises

The following part of the research paper includes suggestions for a reading lesson. It is up to the teacher in what way the text will be used as there is no one right way to do it. These texts are intended for students of intermediate English level.

Each lesson contains the title of the text and then the lesson plan follows. I also mention the source from which the text is extracted

Lessons are divided into three parts: pre - reading activity, while - reading activity and post - reading activity.

Pre - reading activity usually includes new vocabulary. It is necessary to introduce it to the students before they actually read the text. The exercises in post - reading activity are designed to teach comprehension.

1. The Guinness World of Records

Lesson Plan

Age Level: 17 - 18

Level of English Knowledge: intermediate

Time: 40 minutes

Materials: the text with the map and the picture

Aim of Lesson: reading for main idea and for extracting some information, to acquating students with transposition of English system of weights and measures into metric system, revision of superlative adjectives, new vocabulary

Pre - reading activity

1. Questions

Teacher motivates students by questions:

Have you ever heard about Guinness book of the World Records?

Do you know any record written in it?

Would you want to be listed in this book? Why?

What do you do for it?

Vocabulary

Teacher introduces the correct pronunciation .

Choose the correct synonyms to words in the left column:

superb to jump very quickly into water

magnificient under

beneath wonderful

stroll that cannot be defeated

dive excellent

invincible walk

Teacher askes students to guess the meanings of the following words:

Outer Space
to bring st. vividly to life
surface

Text

The text is extracted from the magazine <u>Friendship</u>, 6, 1990, SPN Bratislava, pp. 10 - 11.

The text is divided into two parts. The first part is about the Guinness World of Records in general and the map and task 1 follow after this part. After reading the first part of the text students answer the task 1 and continue to read the second part of the text.

Text (1)

Your trip to London will not be complete without a visit to the Guinness World of Records.

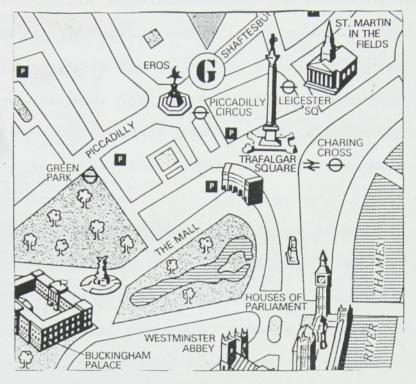
Divided into six "Worlds"--Human, Animal, Sports, Entertaiments, Our Planet Earth, Structures and Machines--the exhibition is a superb three - dimensional display of all that is superlative around the globe.

Using the latest in audio - visual technology, literally thousands of records are on show or available at the touch of a button. What's more, whenever a new sports record is made it's immediately entered into the data banks of our three computers.

You'll find The Guinness World of Records in Piccadilly's magnificent Trocadero Centre.

This lively complex also contains restaurants and shops to make your visit even more enjoyable and is only a short stroll

from both Piccadilly and Leicester Square tube stations.



Task 1

Decide whether these statements are true or false according to the text and the map.

- a) The Guinness World of Records is opposite Bukingham . Palace.
- b) This exhibition is divided into different sections.
- c) Computers are used to enter all the sports records.
- d) The Trocadero Centre is not very far from Piccadilly tube station.

Text (2)



My name is Robert Earl Hughes. You haven't heard of me? Well, you'd find it hard to miss me.

I am one of the heaviest men in the world, which means that I'm very large. In fact, I weigh in at over 76 stone.

Now I'd like to invite you to come and visit me. I'm very easy to find you see, I'm here at the Guinness World of Records Exhibition at the Trocadero Centre in Piccadilly Circus.

That's the exhibition that brings the Guinness Book of Records vividly to life.

It's breathtaking presentation that uses some of the most advanced audio - visual presentation, so that you can actually take part in the exhibition with us.

For instance, you and your friends can compare your weight to mine, or you can stand alongside my friend Robert Wadlow, whilst watching film of him growing into the tallest man in the world. You can hear the man with the loudest snore (I can never get to sleep with him around), or the man with continuous hiccoughs.

You can marvel at the sight of Henri La Mothe, as he dives 28 feet into 12" of water. You'll meet the fastest slimmer, who could teach me a thing or two. And you'll see the largest vegetables in the world. The Animal World will enthral and entertain you, as you meet the most amazing creatures on Earth. In a dramatic transformation the Guinness World of Records will speed you into the far reaches of Outer Space.

You'll go back in time, around the world, and beneath the water surface.

For sports fans, you'll get the chance to see some of your heroes, like the invincible Pele, and the immortal Muhammed Ali. You can watch as the world's greatest sporting records are broken before your eyes.

After all that sporting exertion, we can relax in the World of Entertainment. Hear the songs that have sold millions, and

see the movies and shows.

All the stars have a place at the Guinness World of Records.

So come along and see me and my friends. You'll have the time of your life as you watch the extreme in action. Who knows, we may inspire you to break some records of your own.

Post - reading activity

1. Why are these people registered in Guinness Book of Records?

Complete the chart. Look at the table of weights and measures below and complete the chart using metric system.

People mentioned

Reason for being mentioned

- 1 Robert Earl Hughes
- 2 Robert Wadlow

made a m jump into shallow water

- 4 Pele
- 2. The exhibition is divided into six "Worlds". Write the things you can do in each of them. Refer back to the text if necessary.
 - 1 The Human World
 - 2 The Animal World
 - 3 The Sports World
 - 4 The World of Entertainment
 - 5 Our Planet Earth
 - 6 Structures and Machines
- 3. Complete this summary about the Guinness World of Records.

The Guinness World of Records, which is in (1)

is a great exhibition of (2)

. In this display you will meet Robert Earl Hughes, who is one of (3)

. And Robert Wadlow, who is (4)

. You will be able to hear the man (5)

snore and see Henri La Mothe as the makes a fantastic (6)

into very shallow water. In addition, the Guinness World of Records can take you into Outer Space, around the (7)

, and beneath the surface of (8)

. In the Sports World you will get the chance to see Pele, who is (9)

, and in the World of Entertainment you will be able to relax and listen to the (10)

and see your favourite (11)

and their movies.

4. Grammar work

Find the superlative adjectives in the text and list them in two columns--one with ending - est and one with most.

Teacher revises superlative adjectives with students.

Note

All students joined in the conversation in the beginning because the topic was very attractive for them. They knew much about the Guinness World of Records, especially because some serial about it, was going on TV for some time. Students seemed to be very excited to talk about their ideas about why they would like to be included in this book. Sometimes students had difficulties with vocabulary they wanted to use in the discussion and so they helped themselves with Czech language.

Before reading the text students had to learn new vocabulary. The synonyms were matched correctly. The expression "to bring something vividly to life" was guessed when we had read the sentence from the text. The teacher should not forget

with reading in the map. Only one student asked what "superb three dimensional display" meant. But the other students were able to give the answer. Then students did questions from post—reading activity. They completed the table where English system of weights and measures is used and completed the table in metric system. Students filled in the chart and checked up the results, only three girls made a mistake but it was numeric. The next task (2) needed more time because some students thought about right answers or looked for them in the text. I suggest doing this task as competition—I tried it with my second class: in the second class I divided students into several groups and they answered together and competed among themselves. After that I did task 4 with them—grammar work and task 3 was given them as their homework.

2. Jean Attree

Lesson Plan

Age Level: 17 - 18

Level of English Knowledge: intermediate

Time: 40 minutes

Materials: the text

Aim of Lesson: reading for extracting information from the text,

to be able to express one's ideas about one's

future job, new vocabulary

Pre - reading activity

1. Questions

Teacher activates students by questions about their hobbies and future occupation.

What do you want to be and why? What's your hobby? Would you like to be a photographer? Would you like to be self employed? Why?

2. Pair work

One of you decided to be self - employed and the other one did not. Give your arguments and try to persuade your neighbour that your decision is right and better.

3. Vocabulary

Teacher explains these words in Czech or writes Czech meaning on the blackboard or adds written vocabulary to the text, because these words are too difficult for explaining in English.

commissions

portfolio

steadily

While - reading activity

Teacher directs students'attention to answering questions after their reading.

Text

The text is extracted from catalogue <u>Woman</u>, 2, Baurent Leipzig 1989, p. 19.

Jean Attree recently set up as a professional photographer, turning a hobby into her business.

I've always enjoyed photography and it is something where you learn a lot from experience. Friends told me that my pictures were good, and encouraged me to try and make a living at it. I started in October, and I'm building up confidence and contacts. I've also had work assisting other photographers which is a good way to learn.

I've done various commissions, but at the moment I'm developing my portfolio so that I can get work doing album covers and commissions for magazines. I like doing portraits and I enjoy black and white photography, but colour work pays better.

Self - employment appealed to me as it offered challenge and variety, though I knew there wouldn't be paid holidays or sick leave. Since I started I've learned a lot about the practical aspects of running a business and marketing myself. I'm getting better at dealing with customers--in knowing what they are looking for. I'm hoping the business will build up steadily.

Post - reading activity

1)Who encouraged her in deciding to be a professional photographer?

Choose the right answer from the possibilities below.

- a) her parents
- b) her friends
- c) other photographers
- 2) Jean likes doing portraits and black and white photographies. Why does she do colour work as well?
- 3) Which of these things has Jean learnt to do? Choose the correct answer.
 - a) get commissions for magazines
 - b) build up the bussiness
 - c) run a bussiness and marketing
- 4) Which of these things does Jean hope to do?

 Choose the correct answer.
 - a) get commissions for magazines
 - b) run a business
 - c) build up the business amples o
 - d) work with other photographers
- 5) How does Jean explain "dealing with customers"?
- 6) How does Jean look on being self employed?
- 7) Choose a title for this article.

8) Pair work

What would you like to ask Jean?
Think up two or three questions.

Note

Motivation by teacher's questions about students' hobbies and future occupation in the beginning opened an interesting discussion. Students seemed to be very excited to discuss this topic. After pair work I asked two pairs of students to show us their interview. In work with vocabulary students estimated well the meaning of the words "build up the business". I must say vocabulary of this text is quite difficult. Students had to read very carefully and reading the text took them quite a long time. Next time I would include more words to explain their meaning, because it is necessary to work more with new vocabulary from this text (e.g. building up confidence and contacts, to appeal, it offered challenge). In post - reading work students should have answered the questions. Only questions 3) and 4) were difficult for several students, because they did not read the questions carefully. The most interesting questions for students seemed to be questions 6) and 7). Students took part in discussion and gave many examples of the text's titles. As homework I asked students to prepare an interview about their future job--one student should be a journalist and the other one should be in role of his own future job and should answer

3. Elephant Polo

Lesson Plan

Age Level: 17 - 18

Level of English Knowledge: intermediate

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: , the text and the photo (people playing elephant

polo)

Aim of Lesson: reading for gist, revision of comparative

adjectives, new vocabulary

Pre - reading activity

1. Questions

Look at this rather strange photo.



What do you think people and elephant are doing?

In your opinion, is this animal frightening? Why?

Do you know any sports that involve animals?

Could you guess the rules of this game?

2. Vocabulary

In the following sentences replace underlined words with one appropriate word from the brackets.

- a) Players use wooden <u>mallets</u> to hit the ball. (sticks, paddles, racquets)
- b) One player whispers commands into elephant's ears.

 (tells slowly, tells quietly, tells loudly)
- c) Elephants enjoyed <u>flattening balls</u> too much, that's why now players use hard wooden balls.

 (breaking the balls under the feet, throwing the balls)
- d) Players learnt the new sport in their <u>spare time</u>. (working hours, lunch time, free time)

While - reading activity

Teacher directs students' attention to the fact that they should be able to explain the rules of this new game and answer the questions about the first World Elephant Polo Championship.

Text

The text is extracted from <u>Reading intermediate</u>, Ladousse, G.P., p. 4.

The people balancing on the elephant's back are playing a new game, elephant polo.

The first World Elephant Polo Championship took place in the Royal Chitwan Park in Nepal in 1983, with six teams competing. The main job of the elephants and their drivers is to take visitors for rides in the park. They learnt the new sport in their spare time. Polo is usually played on horseback, and players use wooden mallets to hit the ball towards their opponents goal. With elephants, the game is much slower and the players need much longer mallets. Even so, hitting the ball in the right direction is quite a problem. Two riders, or Mahouts, sit on each elephant. One whispers commands into the elephant's ears and guides it with a stick. The other stops the first player from falling off! At first, players wanted to use a larger ball and tried a football. However, the elephants enjoyed flatening them too much, and hard wooden balls soon replaced the soccer balls. The winners in 1983 were Nepal's Tiger Tops Tuskers, who beat International Pan Am Jumbos 2-0 in the finals.

Post - reading activity

1. Questions

Try to explain the rules of the elephant polo.

Why do the players use the wooden ball?

When and where did the first World Elephant Polo Championship take place and who was the winner?

2. Vocabulary

Look at this list of words taken from the passage you have just read. Could you explain their meaning?

m a 1 1 e t

mahout

toflatten

3. This new game has many similarities the sports football and with horses. With a partner make a list of vocabulary which is connected with these topics.

4. Grammar work

Find the comparatives in the text. Could you give the examples of other comparative forms of adjectives formed in this way?

What is the function of m u ch?

Note

I started reading with looking at the photo and asking the questions about it. Students enjoyed discussing elephants and their use in sport. They tried to guess the rules of this game and I must say they were very successful in guessing. They added their own stories they knew about sports with animals.

The next pre - reading activity is work with vocabulary. It turned out to be unfitting to include the word racquets into the brackets, because some students could not choose between sticks and racquets. I suggest to make the word racquets more accurate—for example tennis racquet or change this word wholly for the next time. Word flattening was explained in Czech as well.

After reading students were able to answer the following questions. In vocabulary work students could explain words. The pair work followed. Students should have made a list of vocabulary connected with football and horses. Boys seemed to be more excited about this work and had more words written in their lists.

In the task 3 we were engaged in grammar--comparative adjectives. All students found them in the text and knew the

function of much. We spoke in Czech about it, because students could not speak about grammar in English. In filling comparatives in sentences some students (3 from 16) made mistakes in spelling comparatives bigger and easier. We revised rules of forming comparative adjectives.

4. The Story of King Arthur

Lesson Plan

Age Level: 17 - 18

Level of English Knowledge: intermediate

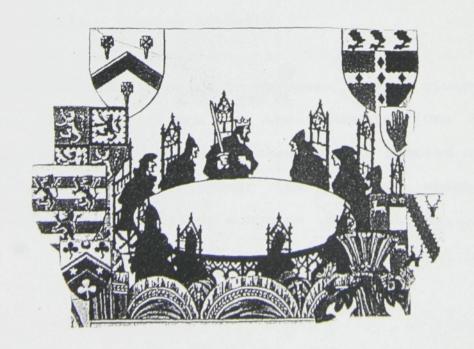
Time: 40 minutes

Materials: envelopes with jumbled text (the number of the envelopes depends on the number of the students' groups), the picture of King Arthur and his knights sitting around the Round Table

Aim of Lesson: putting in correct order a jumbled text, reading for extracting some information - (answering the question), revision of the Past Simple Tense

I cut the particular paragraphs of the text and put them into the envelopes. I needed five envelopes because I divided students into five groups and each group had one envelope. I added one question about the text to each envelope.

I used this picture for motivating of students:



Pre - reading activity

Teacher activates students knowledge about English history, motivates students by questions:

What do you know about King Arthur? When did he rule?
You can see the people sitting at the Round Table. Do you know
the importance of the Round Table?

In this story you will read about certain magician as well.

Can you explain who a magician is? Can you remember the magician's name in this story?

Vocabulary

Teacher tries to explain the meaning in English and he also reminds students of right pronunciation of the following words.

knight

sword

equal

enemy

While - reading activity

Students work in pairs or groups. Teacher gives the envelopes and the instructions to the students (One group was one envelope). Students are asked to put jumbled paragraphs into correct order and answer the question which is put in the envelope (each envelope contains one question).

Text

The text is extracted from the magazine R + R, 7, March 1991, Fortuna Praha 1991, p. 5.

The text is jumbled

- a) Arthur is our king!cried all the knights.
- b) All around England the Knights of the Round Table fought bravely against Arthur's enemies - protecting the weak against the strong.
- c) The Story of King Arthur
- d) When Arthur became king, he quickly united the country.

 Arthur called the greatest knights together and said:
- e) Many years later, Arthur was hurt in a battle. He gave his magic sword to a faithful knight and asked him to throw it into a lake after his death.

The knight did as he was asked. The story says that Arthur did not really die. A small boat took him to a magic place called Avalon. There he sleeps, but he will return when England is in danger.

- f) When the leaders came to London, they saw a stone with a sword in it outside the Archbishop's church. On the stone was some writing.
- The old King Uther was dead and he had no son. Who will be king? Will the knights fight each other and ruin the land?

 An old magician called Merlin went to the Archbishop and said, Call all the great men of Britain to London. There they can see the man who is their king.
- h) "The one who pulls this sword out of this stone will be the king of all England"

- i) All the knights tried, but no one could take the sword out of the stone. Then Arthur came. He took the sword out easily.
- j) We will all sit at this Round Table! It has no top, and no bottom! Here, we are all equal!

Solution for teachers: 1c,2g,3f,4h,5i,6a,7d,8j,9b,10e

Questions put in the envelopes:

- 1) Why did the knights come to London?
- 2) Who was Merlin and what did he say to the knights?
- 3) How did Arthur become the king of England?
- 4) What did Arthur do when he became the king?
- 5) Why did Arthur want the knights to sit at the round table?
- 6) How did Arthur die and what does the story say about dead Arthur?

Post - reading activity

- 1. Students put the jumbled text into the correct order and one student from each group answers the question from the envelope.
- 2. Grammar work

This text contains many verbs in the Past Tense. I used them for revision of the Past Simple. Students classified verbs in the Past Simple Tense into two columns--regular verbs (the first column) and irregular verbs (the second column).

Note

In pre - reading brainstorming students did not know much about King Arthur and history of England in that time. Only

several students were able to answer when Arthur ruled. What they knew was something about the magician Merlin and even the expression "Excalibur"—the name of Arthur's sword. It was important to meet students with new vocabulary and pronunciation because it was quite difficult. During while — reading activity students seemed to be excited in working with the envelopes. I did this activity as a competition—who will be ready earlier. In grammar work students classified verbs in the Past Simple Tense into two columns — regular verbs (one column) and irregular verbs (the second column). They did not have any trouble with it.

5. Cambridge

Lesson Plan

Age Level: 17 - 18

Level of English Knowledge: intermediate

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: the .text and the picture of King's College Chapel,

map of Great Britain

Aim of Lesson: reading for main ideas and for extracting some information, new vocabulary, learning some facts about Cambridge

Pre - reading activity

Teacher motivates students by questions and by work with the map of Great Britain.

What do you know about Cambridge? Where is Cambridge (show in the map)? Who studies in Cambridge? Would you like to study there? Why? What interesting facts could you give about your town? Where is the nearest university from your living - place?

Vocabulary

ancient city - try to find a synonym

in response - to the purpose

research institutes--try to guess the Czech meaning

Text

The text is extracted from <u>Spotlight on Britain</u>, Sheerin and Seath and White, 1990, p. 42.

Cambridge must be one of the best - known towns in the Warld, and can be found on most tourists lists of places to

visit. The principal reason for its fame is its University, which started during the 13th century and grew steadily, until today there are more than twenty colleges.

Most of them allow visitors to enter the grounds and courtyards. The most popular place from which to view them is from the Backs, where the college grounds go down to the River Cam.

The oldest college is Peterhouse, which was founded in 1284, and the most recent is Robinson College, which was opened in 1977. The most famous is probably King's, because of its magnificent chapel. Its choir of boys and undergraduates is also very well known.

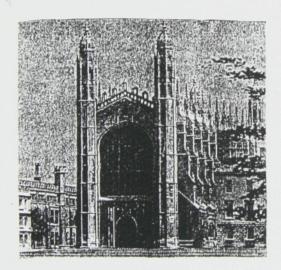
The University was exclusively for men until 1871 when the first women's college was opened. Another was opened two years later and a third in 1954. In the 1970s, most colleges opened their doors to both men and women. Almost all the colleges are now mixed, but it will be many years before there are equal numbers of both sexes.

To the North of this ancient city is the modern face of the University - the Cambridge Science Park, which has developed in response to the need for universities to increase their contact with high technology industry. It was established in 1970 by Trinity College, which has a long scientific tradition going back to Sir Isaac Newton. It is now home to more than sixty companies and research institutes.

The ideas of science and parks may not seem to go together naturally, but the whole area is, in fact, very attractively designed, with a lot of space between each building. The planners thought that it was important for people to have a pleasant, park - like environment in which to work.

1. True or False?

- a) Cambridge University started during the thirteenth century.
- b) The most recent College is Peterhouse.
 - c) The first women's college was opened in 1954.
 - d) Now there are equal numbers of men and women.
 - e) The Cambridge Science Park was established for universities' contact with high technology.
 - 2. Look at the picture of King's College Chapel.
 What could you say about it?



3. Yoù have read about Cambridge Science Park.

What is the purpose of a science park?

Note

I used this text as a supplement to the realia lesson in which students learned about some well - known towns in Great Britain. Neither questions at the beginning nor text are particularly difficult for students. They usually write correctly post - reading exercise "True or False" and have not difficulties with next exercises. What I want from them is that

they should write several new things about Cambridge and learn

V. Conclusion

Many teachers do not give appropriate attention to the process of practising reading skills because of ignorance of substance of this process and lack of the appropriate texts in their textbooks. As textbooks almost do not contain such suitable texts for reading, teacher has to decide himself if he wants to enrich his lesson and for this purpose supplement the textbook by some appropriate texts from magazines, newspapers, other books and so on.

Teacher should use specific reading skills in his reading lesson that help students get most from their reading and develop students' abilities to comprehend the text. Teacher has to keep in his mind that reading is not synonym for translation and practising pronunciation but for comprehension. On the basis of my experience from reading lessons it is necessary to point out that great importance in successful comprehension has motivation students before their actual reading. Teacher should provoke students' interests in reading the text and prepare students to find answers to a number of questions and specific information or ideas.

Introduction of new vocabulary is also of great importance. Students should get to know with unknown words or difficult structures so as not to be panic and could concentrate on comprehending the text.

Finally, teacher should add several exercises to teach comprehension, not to test it. Those exercises help students understand difficult areas of a text, draw attention to the writer's main points and give them practise in skills that induce to successful comprehension of the text.

No one method of teaching reading can fit all

circumstances, but ways of adapting teaching practises that were successful in meeting the needs of a particular group, can be applied whenever a similar situation exists. I tried to show how it is possible to use the chosen texts in a reading lesson. I hope, my final paper can help techers in their preparing

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Mirka Trojanová Comprehending the Text: The Aim of Developing Reading Skills

In her paper Mirka Trojanová prepared a collection of texts that can be utilized in teaching intermediate students. She expresses repeatedly her opinion that reading is neglected by majority of teachers or mistaken for practising pronunciation or translation but this statement is not illustrated or proved in any way. The fact the teachers neglect reading or do not utilize it fully is explained by lack of understanding on the side of teachers and partly by the fact that most of textbooks suffer from a lack of good reading texts.

Mirka Trojanová gives a thorough explanation of comprehending the text, reading comprehension, she stresses the necessity to use strategies developing comprehension and talks about possible preparations or adaptations of the chosen text. For all of her comments she provides enough quotations from experts' opinions to illustrate and support them.

With each text and lesson plan she adds the age level, time for which the activity is planned, material needed, clearly defined aims of the lesson, and stages. She also adds pictures that can be used with her texts.

All of the lesson plans describe in detail all the pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activites and procedures that the author uses.

Each lesson plan is followed by a detailed description of her experience from the classes, where she describes her problems and suggests possible variations in the future.

With each text a source where the text was taken from is added. Her texts are suitable for the chosen age level, motivating and interesting and the variety of activities is encouraging.

In the conclusion she summarises the main ideas of her project and confirms that development of individual reading strategies that she has been dealing with in the project leads to comprehending the reading text.

The project is written with a generally good level of English.

I recommend the paper to be evaluated as a passing one.

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