

## SUGGESTED MODEL FOR ESP READING LESSON DESIGN

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### ABSTRACT

This paper proposes an approach to designing effective English for Specific Purposes (ESP) reading lessons. By drawing on established theories and practical insights, the model aims to enhance learners' reading comprehension and language skills. The suggested model incorporates a series of steps, including vocabulary pre-teaching, pre-reading activities, multiple reading strategies (scanning, skimming, and in-depth reading), comprehension checks aligned with Bloom's Taxonomy, post-reading discussions, and supplementary activities. This framework provides ESP teachers with a practical tool and clear-cut procedures to create engaging and effective reading lessons that cater to the specific needs of their students.

**Keywords:** *ESP, lesson design, reading strategies, specific needs*

### INTRODUCTION

Preparation of teaching materials is one of the main concerns of language teachers and often requires a great amount of effort, time, and deliberation. As for the ESP courses at the School of Foreign Languages (SFL), University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City (UEH), the focus on teaching materials most predominantly lies in the area of reading because it is regarded as a means that enables students to access reference materials in English, which is their most important foreign language need both in their college training and in their jobs-to-be after graduation. With the wish to contribute to the improvement of ESP teaching and learning, this paper sought to provide clear-cut procedures and a set of tools that can be readily applied to the activity of designing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) reading materials by teachers at SFL.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Cunningsworth (1995:134), the principles applied to designing ESP materials are methodologically the same as general teaching materials, but he supplements:

“Additionally, we might expect to see an emphasis on the development of specific skills and strategies for operating in ESP context. This can be done by the use of skill-based and task-based activities involving an element of problem-solving and drawing substantially for their content on the learner’s specialist subject knowledge and professional experience.”

With the aim to provide skills, strategies, and vocabulary that will enable students to read texts of a specific area of study, the writers can base the format for reading lessons on Hutchinson and Waters’ model:

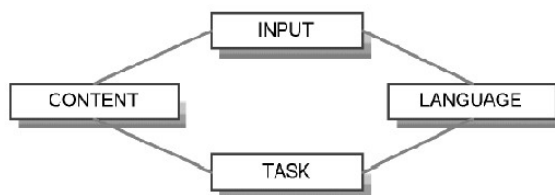


Figure 1: Hutchinson and Waters' Model

LANGUAGE is not an end in itself, but a means of conveying information and feelings about something (CONTENT). The ultimate aim should always be to enable learners to USE language – but they must have the necessary language knowledge (INPUT). Penafiora (1995) highly values this model.

“The model acts as a vehicle which leads the learners to the point where they are able to carry out the task. The LANGUAGE and CONTENT are drawn from the INPUT and are selected according to what the learners will need in order to do the TASK”

Penafiora (1995:182, emphasis added)

In relation to the structure of the material, we consider not only the content of the material to be used but also the tasks. Its objective is to develop the ability to read authentic texts with an adequate comprehension level. Willis (1996:53) provides a helpful definition of a task:

“A goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome. In other words, learners use whatever language resources they have in order to solve a problem, do a puzzle, play a game, or share and compare experiences.”

Using appropriate strategies for various reading tasks may be helpful to increase comprehension as Sanderson (1999:15) argues:

“In practice, very low-level students can work with difficult texts, provided the task we set is suited to their level and demands less-than-complete reading of the text in order for it to be completed successfully”

Davies (1995:144) states that good reading tasks that are characterized by the following features:

- typically makes use of authentic and challenging texts;
- provides students with a rhetorical or topical framework for processing and analyzing the text;
- frequently involves an oral reading of the text by the teacher or a student followed by silent reading and rereading of the text;
- involves the students interacting with the text and with each other;
- involves students in direct analysis of the text instead of indirect question answering;
- frequently involves the transfer of information from text to a visual or diagrammatic representation.

(Nunan,1999: 262 cited in Davies, 1995:144)

It is clear that using appropriate strategies for various reading tasks increases comprehension, but acquiring an array of strategies is a long and difficult process. There should be diversity in types and balance between language use and language usage in developing exercises and activities for each lesson. Such strategies as skimming for the main idea, scanning for specific information, predicting what a text is about or what will happen next, and making use of the context and illustrations to discover word meanings are critical for English language learners beyond the beginning level. Nunan (1999:268) suggests some skills and strategies for a reading lesson as follows:

- Use pre-reading, shema-building tasks, particularly with lower proficiency students to help them apply what they already know to task of reading;
- Teach learners strategies such as predicting, skimming, scanning and give them opportunities to match the strategies to the purposes;
- Provide a variety of reading purposes;
- With higher proficiency students, develop activities for helping them identify and track logical and referential relationships in texts;
- Use activities that require students to transform data from one modality to another and form textual to nontextual (e.g. diagrammatic) form;
- Give students opportunities to go beyond the texts, evaluating and critiquing what they read.

Reading practice should be part of an integrated teaching/learning sequence. The reading text might be preceded by activities that introduce the text and encourage learners to use their background knowledge. When readers encounter a new text, they activate relevant schemata to make connections between the new information and their existing knowledge. This process enhances understanding, recall, and critical thinking. Schemata<sup>1</sup> are higher-level complex knowledge structures (van Dijk, 1981, p.141) that function as "ideational scaffolding" (Anderson, 1977). Students can brainstorm ideas about the meaning of a title or an illustration and discuss what they know. The discussions in this step can be later used perhaps as a stimulus for role-play or problem-solving. Modified cloze exercises, where examples of the target structure (e.g., prepositions) are deleted from a text and learners fill in as many blanks as they can, are also helpful.

For assessing comprehension, Bloom (1956) introduced Bloom's Taxonomy as a framework to categorize different levels of cognitive thinking. It helps teachers structure learning experiences to promote higher-order thinking skills. The taxonomy includes six levels, starting with the most basic: Knowledge (remembering facts), Comprehension (understanding information), Application (using knowledge in new situations), Analysis (breaking down information

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<sup>1</sup> Schema (plural: Shemata)theory is an explanation of how readers use prior knowledge to comprehend and learn from text (Shuying An (2013) cited in-- Rumelhart,1980).

into parts), Synthesis (combining information to create something new), and Evaluation (judging the value of information). By progressing through these levels, learners develop critical thinking skills, enabling them to analyze, solve problems, and make informed decisions.

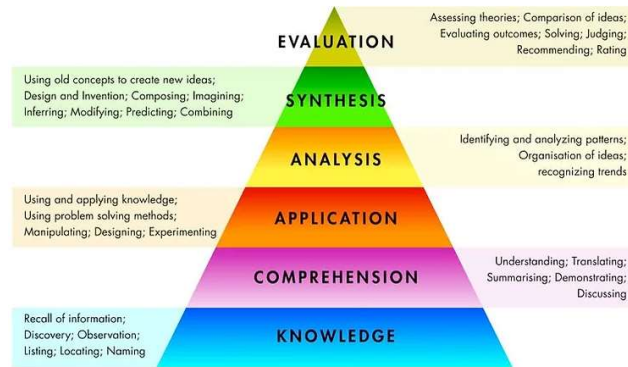


Figure 2: Bloom's Taxonomy

## SUGGESTED ESP READING LESSON FORMAT

The following model offers a standardized approach to developing reading lessons, which can be used as a blueprint.

### 1. Vocabulary

- anticipate vocabulary that might be unfamiliar/ troublesome for students.
- design activities that help students infer the meanings of new words.
  - ✓ context clues
  - ✓ clues from word roots and affixes (for meaning and part of speech)
  - ✓ do a puzzle/ word search, play a game

To ensure smooth learning, it's essential to anticipate vocabulary challenges that students might encounter. By designing activities that encourage students to infer the meanings of new words, we can enhance their vocabulary acquisition and comprehension skills. These activities can include utilizing context clues, exploring word roots and affixes to determine both meaning and part of speech, or engaging in interactive puzzles, word searches, and games to make the learning process enjoyable and effective.

### 2. Pre-Reading Activities

- activate appropriate background knowledge for the upcoming text through one or more of the following (the list is not exhaustive; you should develop what works best for a given text and your students):
  - ✓ questions/questionnaire
  - ✓ discussion (whole class or in pairs/groups)
  - ✓ listening to related information
  - ✓ consideration of visual material that appears in the text
- generate hypotheses about the topic:
  - ✓ heading, subheadings

To prepare students for the upcoming text, engaging in pre-reading activities can significantly enhance comprehension and retention. By activating prior knowledge, teachers can bridge the gap between what students already know and what they are about to learn. This can be achieved through various techniques such as posing thought-provoking questions, facilitating class discussions, or sharing relevant audio or visual materials. Additionally, encouraging students to form hypotheses based on headings and subheadings can spark curiosity and focus their attention. By establishing a clear purpose for reading, whether it's to solve a problem, answer a question, or simply enjoy a story, teachers can motivate students to actively engage with the text.

### 3. While-Reading Activities

#### First Reading: Scanning for Specific Information

- have students look for specific information easily recovered from the text
- name of author
- publication
- numbers
- dates
- written material that is underlined in bold print or italics
- organizational features, such as subheadings and the number of sections in the text

The first reading technique, scanning for specific information, involves a quick search for easily identifiable details within the text. Students can efficiently locate the author's name, publication details, numerical data, dates, highlighted text (underlined, bolded, or italicized), and organizational elements such as subheadings and section divisions. This initial scan provides a foundational understanding of the text's content and structure, preparing students for a more in-depth analysis in subsequent readings. This empowers students to efficiently extract crucial information from a text, saving them time and effort.

[PLACE THE TEXT AT THIS POINT]

#### Second Reading: Skimming for the Main Idea

- encourage ss to read the text quickly without stopping to look up unfamiliar words
- check for understanding of the general/main idea/s (either whole text or subparts if the text is relatively long)

To skim a text for the main idea, encourage students to read quickly without getting bogged down in details or unfamiliar vocabulary. The goal is to grasp the overall topic or central message. To assess their understanding, ask students to identify the main idea of the entire text or specific sections. This could involve summarizing the key points in their own words or selecting the most appropriate title from a list of options.

#### Third Reading: Thorough Reading

- set up appropriate purposes for the re-reading of the text
  - e.g. have students preview the info they will be asked about after reading
- students reread the text (dictionaries should still not be used)

The third reading, or thorough reading, is a crucial stage in the reading process. To maximize its effectiveness, teachers should establish clear purposes for the rereading. This could involve providing students with specific questions to answer or tasks to complete, such as identifying the main idea or summarizing key points. By setting clear goals, students are motivated to engage deeply with the text. During this stage, students should reread the text independently, without the aid of dictionaries. This encourages them to rely on context clues and their growing knowledge of the language to understand the meaning.

#### Comprehension Check

- activities that assess the student's comprehension of the text
- pose a variety of question types
- provide different formats
  - true/false
  - multiple choice
  - open-ended
  - information transfer
- make sure that the activity checks comprehension of the material in the text and that it cannot be completed without having read the text!

To ensure students have grasped the text's content, a variety of comprehension checks can be implemented. These assessments should incorporate diverse question types, ranging from straightforward literal questions to more complex

global and inferential inquiries. To cater to different learning styles, a mix of formats is recommended, including true/false, multiple-choice, open-ended, and information transfer activities. Crucially, the activities must be designed to assess comprehension of the specific text and cannot be completed without a thorough reading. This ensures that students actively engage with the material and demonstrate their understanding.

To ensure comprehensive understanding, we can apply Bloom's Taxonomy framework of six cognitive thinking levels, each aligned with specific question types. This structure enables teachers to assess students' grasp of information, from basic recall to complex critical analysis and creative synthesis. By utilizing Bloom's Taxonomy, teachers can craft questions that stimulate deeper thinking and promote meaningful learning experiences.

Cognitive Thinking Levels	Types of questions
(i) <b>Knowledge</b> questions require simple identification/recall of information/facts. The answer will be very specific, as the question suggests: a number, a specific time, etc.	- who/what/where/when/how . . . . ?
(ii) <b>Comprehension</b> means understanding or mentally grasping the meaning of something. Comprehension questions test understanding of information. The answer to a comprehension question usually is something you can point to in the paragraph or passage.	- "Retell . . . in your own words" - "What is the main idea of . . . ." - "According to this paragraph, . . ./According to this passage, . . ./According to this article, . . ." - "You are to find . . ." (answers will include phrases or sentences) - "This means . . ." - "It is clear from this passage that . . ."
(iii) <b>Application</b> questions ask learners to use knowledge/facts/rules/principles in new situations.	- "How is . . . an example of . . . ?" - "How is . . . related to . . . ?" - "Why is . . . significant?"
(iv) <b>Analysis</b> questions break down information into parts to examine relationships	"What are the parts/features of . . . ." "Classify . . . according to . . . ." "Outline/diagram . . . ." "How does . . . compare/contrast with . . . ." "What evidence can you list for . . . ."
(v) <b>Synthesis</b> questions involve creating something new by combining different ideas	"What would you predict/infer from . . . ." "What ideas can you add to . . . ." "How would you create/design a new . . . ." "What might happen if you combined . . . . with . . . ." "What solutions would you suggest for . . . ."
(vi) <b>Evaluation</b> questions require judgment and decision-making based on criteria	"Do you agree/disagree with . . . ." "What do you think about . . . ." "What is the most important . . . ." "How would you decide about . . . ." "What criteria would you use to assess . . . ."

#### 4. Post-Reading Activities

##### Discussion

Discussion activities can be designed to enhance student engagement and understanding of the content material. These activities can include speaking activities centered around the topic, discussions that delve deeper into the material, and opportunities for students to relate the content to their own personal experiences.

##### Desirable: Present a RELATED TEXT

To further enrich the learning experience, a related text from a different source and genre can be introduced. This supplementary text, while distinct in format, will seamlessly connect to the primary text by exploring similar themes or ideas. This interdisciplinary approach fosters a deeper understanding of the subject matter and encourages critical thinking skills.

##### Homework

Homework assignments can extend learning beyond the classroom. By assigning tasks and exercises through a Learning Management System (LMS), students can continue to explore the content at their own pace.

## CONCLUSION

As for A reading lesson format, some principles identified in reviewing the Literature are regarded as theoretical guidelines. A great deal of this paper has been conducted on how to integrate such materials along with pedagogically well-designed reading tasks into the development of students' reading strategies which can be used to help them get a fuller understanding of the text. Good reading tasks should, in the words of Hutchinson and Waters (1987), "*lead the learners to the point where they are able to carry out the task.*" In principle, the design of reading lessons is a complex process that should follow the guidelines suggested in the literature on reading methodology. However, through working from a practical task back to the theoretical basis, there appear many problems that materials designers need to overcome. By proposing a framework for developing an effective ESP reading lesson, it is hoped that it help standardize the process, reduce time and effort, and make improvements to the current practice for materials development at SFL.

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