

The Language Strategy

'Strengthening Reading Skills &
Note-Taking for English Academic
Texts in History'

Introductory Lecture

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The Language Strategy: More Languages for More Students (2013-2018)

Motivation

- Students must be given easily available opportunities to acquire competence in another foreign language and another culture than the anglosaxon.

Goals

- Implement the university language strategy
- Provide all students with relevant language skills (especially students outside foreign language degrees)
- Prepare students for the global market

Today

- To equip students with tools and strategies to cope with the challenges of reading domain specific texts in English
- To introduce students to note-taking techniques when implementing reading strategies and skills

- 1. Reading**
- 2. General Challenges**
- 3. What is Academic Reading?**
- 4. The Importance of a Large Vocabulary**
- 5. Reading and Note-taking**
- 6. Sources**
- 7. Study Groups**
- 8. It is Not a Murder Mystery...**
- 8. Tasks for Workshop 1**
- 9. References and Links**

1. Reading

“Reading is about understanding written texts.

It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought.”

Dhakai (2010)

“If wisdom, or some less grandiose notion such as heightened awareness, is to be the end of our endeavors, we shall have to see it not as something transmitted from the text to the student but as something developed in the student by questioning the text.”

Scholes (1985)

There are many good reasons to read:

1. Reading **correctly** increases the efficiency of study methods.
2. Reading improves all language skills.
3. Good reading skills and strategies turn readers into good writers.
4. Reading exposes people to the accumulated wisdom of human civilization.
5. Mature readers bring to the text their experiences, abilities, and interests; in turn, the text brings knowledge to the reader.

Reading is a neglected and underestimated skill

1. Not taught (enough) in secondary school, high school and university.
2. It is generally assumed that reading skills are known because '*everyone knows how to read*'.
3. Numerous students experience difficulties reading academic texts.
4. Students drown in a flood of texts.
5. ...

There are 3 different models to approach reading

1. Top Down Process

-> "It is an eagle's-eye view of a landscape below."

2. Bottom Up Process

-> Through the details (linguistic signals) the reader decodes the message (the text).

3. The interactive model of reading

- > Involves both bottom-up and top-down process
- > Combination of textual information with the information the reader brings to text.
- > The readers' cultural background and values are important.

An example of a top-down approach

Michelangelo, Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel



Zappella (n.d.) retrieved from <https://da.khanacademy.org/humanities/renaissance-reformation/high-ren-florence-rome/michelangelo/a/michelangelo-ceiling-of-the-sistine-chapel>



An example of bottom-up approach

'The farmer put the straw on a pile beside his threshing machine.'

1. Farmer = person in agriculture
2. The = particular person spoken about
3. Put = action in the past of placing or setting down
4. Straw = two meanings: drinking tube and grain stalk -> right meaning is for later when pieces are put together
5. ...

2. General Challenges

Which challenges typically occur when you read an Academic English text in your subject?

A lack of time to read the text completely

- **PRACTISE – READ REGULARLY**

A tendency **to translate literally** → time-consuming

- **PRACTISE – READ REGULARLY**

Superficial reading -> only concepts (not the argumentation or nuances) are understood

- **KNOW WHAT / HOW TO READ**

Word for word reading → slow and overwhelmed

- **KNOW WHAT / HOW TO READ**

A struggle with difficult and **incomprehensible vocabulary** (academic + domain specific)

- **PRACTISE - ENLARGE VOCABULARY**

What is Academic Reading?

- 1 Purpose
- 2 Skills
- 3 Strategies

Purpose

Find **the purpose** for why you read!

Skills

- Word recognition
- Making inferences
- Understanding information from diagrammatic display
- Distinguishing main ideas from supporting details
- Interpreting text from your own point of view
- Predicting what is going to be read
- Skimming for main theme of the text
- Scanning for specific information
- Reading for detail

Skimming

Purpose?

- To understand the **gist** → the general idea of the text
- Read quickly
- Look at headings, subheadings and topic sentences.
- Repetition of key words.

Scanning

Purpose?

- to look for specific pieces of information or specific words in the text
- to ignore information not relevant to your purpose

Reading for detail

Purpose?

- To understand the text in detail
- Read every word in the text, and think carefully about the meaning of every sentence
- Time saver: skim the text before reading for detail

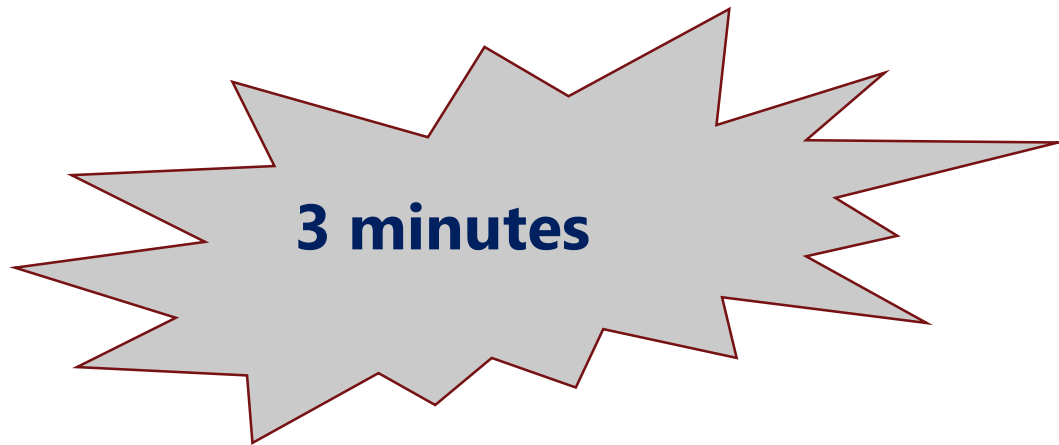
Topic sentence & transitions

- A topic sentence **is a sentence that captures the meaning** of the entire paragraph or group of sentences – it tells what the passage is mainly about (often at the beginning of a paragraph)
- Good transitions can **connect paragraphs** and turn disconnected writing into a **unified whole**. Instead of treating paragraphs as separate ideas, transitions can help readers **understand how paragraphs work together, reference one another, and build to a larger point**.

(<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/574/01/>)

A practical example of how to skim/ read an extract of a simple academic text.

1. Please skim the text and highlight what you skim.
2. What is the gist of the text?



Native American Influences on Modern U.S. Culture

When the first Europeans came to the North American continent, they encountered the completely new cultures of the Native American peoples of North America. Native Americans, who had highly developed cultures in many respects, must have been as curious about the strange European manners and customs as the Europeans were curious about them. As always happens when two or more cultures come into contact, there was a cultural exchange. Native Americans adopted some of the Europeans' ways, and the Europeans adopted some of their ways. As a result, Native Americans have made many valuable contributions to modern U.S. culture, particularly in the areas of language, art, food and government.

First of all, Native Americans left a permanent mark on the English language. The early English-speaking settlers borrowed from several different Native American languages words for places in this new land. All across the country are cities, towns, rivers and states with Native American names. For example, the states Delaware, Iowa, Illinois, and Alabama are names after Native American tribes, as are the cities of Chicago, Miami and Spokane. In addition to place names, English adopted from various Native American languages the words for animals and plants found in the Americas. *Chipmunk, moose, raccoon, skunk, tobacco* and *squash* are just a few examples.

Although the vocabulary of English is the area that shows the most Native American influence, it is not the only area of U.S. culture that has been shaped by contact with Native Americans. Art is another area of important Native American contributions. Wool rugs woven by women of the Navajo tribe in Arizona and New Mexico are highly valued works of art in the United States. Native American jewelry made from silver and turquoise is also very popular and very expensive. Especially in the western and southwestern regions of the United States, native crafts such as pottery, leather products and beadwork can be found in many homes. Indeed, native art and handicrafts are a treasured part of U.S. culture.

In addition to language and art, agriculture is another area in which Native Americans had a great and lasting influence on the peoples who arrived here from Europe, Africa and Asia. Being skilled farmers, the Native Americans of North America taught the newcomers many things about farming techniques and crops. Every U.S. schoolchild has heard the story of how Native Americans taught the first settlers to place a dead fish in a planting hole to provide fertilizer for the growing plant. Furthermore, they taught the settlers irrigation methods and crop rotation. Many of the foods people in the United States eat today were introduced to the Europeans by Native Americans. For example, corn and chocolate were unknown in Europe. Now they are staples in the U.S. diet.

Finally, it may surprise some people to learn that citizens of the United States are also indebted to the native people for our form of government. The Iroquois, who were an extremely large tribe with many branches called 'nations', had developed a highly sophisticated system of government to settle disputes that arose between the various branches. Five of the nations had joined together in a confederation called 'The League of the Iroquois'. Under the league, each nation was autonomous in running its own internal affairs, but the nations acted as a unit when dealing with outsiders. The league kept the Iroquois from fighting among themselves and was also valuable in diplomatic relations with other tribes. When the 13 colonies were considering what kind of government to establish after they had won their independence from Britain, someone suggested that they use a system similar to that of the League of the Iroquois. Under this system, each colony or future state would be autonomous in managing its own affairs but would join forced with the other states to deal with matters that concerned them all. This is exactly what happened. As a result, the present form of government of the United States can be traced directly back to a Native American model.

In conclusion, we can easily see from these few examples the extent of Native American influence on our language, our art forms, our eating habits and our government. The people of the United States are deeply indebted to Native Americans for their contributions to U.S. culture.

Native American Influences on Modern U.S. Culture

Clear title

When the first Europeans came to the North American continent, they encountered the completely new cultures of the Native American peoples of North America. Native Americans, who had highly developed cultures in many respects, must have been as curious about the strange European manners and customs as the Europeans were curious about them. As always happens when two or more cultures come into contact, there was a cultural exchange. Native American adopted some of the Europeans' ways, and the Europeans adopted some of their ways. **As a result, Native Americans have made many valuable contributions to modern U.S. culture, particularly in the areas of language, art, food and government.**

Thesis statement offers a structure for the rest of the text

First § topic sentence: focus on language

First of all, Native Americans left a permanent mark on the English language. The early English-speaking settlers borrowed from several different Native American languages words for places in this new land. All across the country are cities, towns, rivers and states with Native American names. For example, the states Delaware, Iowa, Illinois, and Alabama are names after Native American tribes, as are the cities of Chicago, Miami and Spokane. **In addition to place names,** English adopted from various Native American languages the words for animals and plants found in the Americas. *Chipmunk, moose, raccoon, skunk, tobacco* and *squash* are just a few examples.

Although the vocabulary of English is the area that shows the most Native American influence, it is not the only area of U.S. culture that has been shaped by contact with Native Americans. **Art is another area of important Native American contributions.** Wool rugs woven by women of the Navajo tribe in Arizona and New Mexico are highly valued works of art in the United States. Native American jewelry made from silver and turquoise is also very popular and very expensive. Especially in the western and southwestern regions of the United States, native crafts such as pottery, leather products and beadwork can be found in many homes. *Indeed,* native art and handicrafts are a treasured part of U.S. culture.

First sentence of paragraph 2 connects §2 with §1 through the use of "although" and the repetition of §1 topic: language

Topic sentence §2: art

In addition to language and art, agriculture is another area in which Native Americans had a great and lasting influence on the peoples who arrived here from Europe, Africa and Asia. Being skilled farmers, the Native Americans of North America taught the newcomers many things about farming techniques and crops. Every U.S. schoolchild has heard the story of how Native Americans taught the first settlers to place a dead fish in a planting hole to provide fertilizer for the growing plant. **Furthermore**, they taught the settlers irrigation methods and crop rotation. Many of the foods people in the United States eat today were introduced to the Europeans by Native Americans. **For example**, corn and chocolate were unknown in Europe. Now they are staples in the U.S. diet.

Topic sentence § 3: agriculture

Cohesive device: Repetition of two previous topics connects § 3 with § 4.

Finally, it may surprise some people to learn that citizens of the United States are also indebted to the native people for our form of **government**. The Iroquois, who were an extremely large tribe with many branches called ‘nations’, had developed a highly sophisticated system of government to settle disputes that arose between the various branches. (...) Under this system, each colony or future state would be autonomous in managing its own affairs but would join forced with the other states to deal with matters that concerned them all. This is exactly what happened. **As a result,** the present form of government of the United States can be traced directly back to a Native American model.

Connective

Topic sentence § 4: form of government



In conclusion, we can easily see from these few examples the extent of Native American influence on our language, our art forms, our eating habits and our government. The people of the United States are deeply indebted to Native Americans for their contributions to U.S. culture.

Concluding §

Repetition structure
of text & main topic
text



- What is the gist of the text based on the skimming activity?
- Can you distinguish the main ideas from the supporting details?
- Are you able to interpret the text from your own point of view?

A practical example of how to skim/ read an extract of an academic text in history

1. Please skim the extract and highlight what you skim.
2. Find the gist of the extract.



5 minutes

The History Manifesto

Jo Guldi

David Armitage

Armitage, D., & Guldi, J. (2014). *The History Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Introduction: The bonfire of the humanities?

A spectre is haunting our time: the spectre of the short term.

We live in a moment of accelerating crisis that is characterised by the shortage of long-term thinking. Even as rising sea-levels threaten low-lying communities and coastal regions, the world's cities stockpile waste, and human actions poison the oceans, earth, and groundwater for future generations. We face rising economic inequality within nations even as inequalities between countries abate while international hierarchies revert to conditions not seen since the late eighteenth century, when China last dominated the global economy. Where, we might ask, is safety, where is freedom? What place will our children call home? There is no public office of the long term that you can call for answers about who, if anyone, is preparing to respond to these epochal changes. Instead, almost every aspect of human life is plotted and judged, packaged and paid for, on time-scales of a few months or years. There are few opportunities to shake those projects loose from their short-term moorings. It can hardly seem worth while to raise questions of the long term at all.

In the age of the permanent campaign, politicians plan only as far as their next bid for election. They invoke children and grandchildren in public speeches, but electoral cycles of two to seven years determine which issues prevail. The result is less money for crumbling infrastructure and schools and more for any initiative that promises jobs right now. The same short horizons govern the way most corporate boards organise their futures. Quarterly cycles mean that executives have to show profit on a regular basis.¹ Long-term investments in human resources disappear from the balance sheet, and so they are cut. International institutions, humanitarian bodies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) must follow the same logic and adapt their programmes to annual or at most triennial constraints. No one, it seems, from bureaucrats to board members, or voters and recipients of international aid, can escape the ever-present threat of short-termism.

There are individuals who buck the trend, of course. In 1998, the Californian cyber-utopian Stewart Brand created the Long Now Foundation to promote consciousness of broader spans of time. 'Civilization is revving itself into a pathologically short attention span', he wrote: 'Some sort of balancing corrective to the short-sightedness is needed – some mechanism or myth that encourages the long view and the taking of long-term responsibility, where "the long term" is measured at least in centuries.' Brand's charismatic solution to the problem of short-termism is the Clock of the Long Now, a mechanism operating on a computational span of 10,000 years designed precisely to measure time in centuries, even millennia.²

But the lack of long-range perspective in our culture remains. The disease even has a name – 'short-termism'. Short-termism has many practitioners but few defenders. It is now so deeply ingrained in our institutions that it has become a habit – frequently followed but rarely justified, much complained about but not often diagnosed. It was only given a name, at least in English, in the 1980s, after which usage skyrocketed significantly (see [Figure 1](#)).

The most ambitious diagnosis of short-termism to date came from the Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations. In October 2013, a blue-ribbon panel chaired by Pascal Lamy, former Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), issued its report, *Now for the Long Term*, 'focusing on the increasing short-termism of modern politics and our collective inability to break the gridlock which undermines attempts to address the biggest challenges that will shape our future'. Though the tone of the report was hardly upbeat, its thrust was forward-looking and future-oriented. Its motto might have been the words quoted in its introduction and attributed to former French premier Pierre Mendès France: *gouverner, c'est prévoir* – to govern is to foresee.³

Imagining the long term as an alternative to the short term may not be so difficult, but putting long-termism into practice may be harder to achieve. When institutions or individuals want to peer into the future, there is a dearth of knowledge about how to go about this task. Instead of facts, we routinely resort to theories. We have been told, for instance, that there was an end to history and that the world is hot, flat, and crowded.⁴ We have read that all human events are reducible to models derived from physics, translated by economics or political science, or explained by a theory of evolution that looks back to our hunter-gatherer ancestors. Editorials apply economic models to sumo wrestlers and palaeolithic anthropology to customs of dating.⁵ These lessons are repeated on the news, and their proponents are elevated to the status of public intellectuals. Their rules seem to point to unchanging levers that govern our world. But they do little to explain the shifting hierarchy of economies or the changes in gender identity and reconfigurations of banking witnessed in our own time. Only in rare conversations does anyone notice that there are long-term changes flowing around us, ones that are relevant and possible to see. The world around us is clearly one of change, irreducible to models. Who is trained to steadily wait upon and translate them for others, these vibrations of deeper time?

Even those who have assigned themselves the task of inspecting the future typically peer only shortsightedly into the past. Stewart Brand's Clock of the Long Now points 10,000 years ahead but looks barely a century backwards. The Martin Commission searched for evidence for various 'megatrends' – among them, population growth, shifts in migration, employment, inequality, sustainability, and health care – but the Commission included no historians to tell them how much these trends had changed over a lifespan, or the truly long-term of centuries or millennia. In fact, few of the examples the Commission cited in *Now for the Long Term* came from before the late 1940s. Most of the evidence entertained by these self-proclaimed futurologists came from the last thirty years, even though the relevant section of the report carried the title, 'Looking Back to Look Forward'. Such historical myopia is itself a symptom of the short-termism they are trying to overcome.

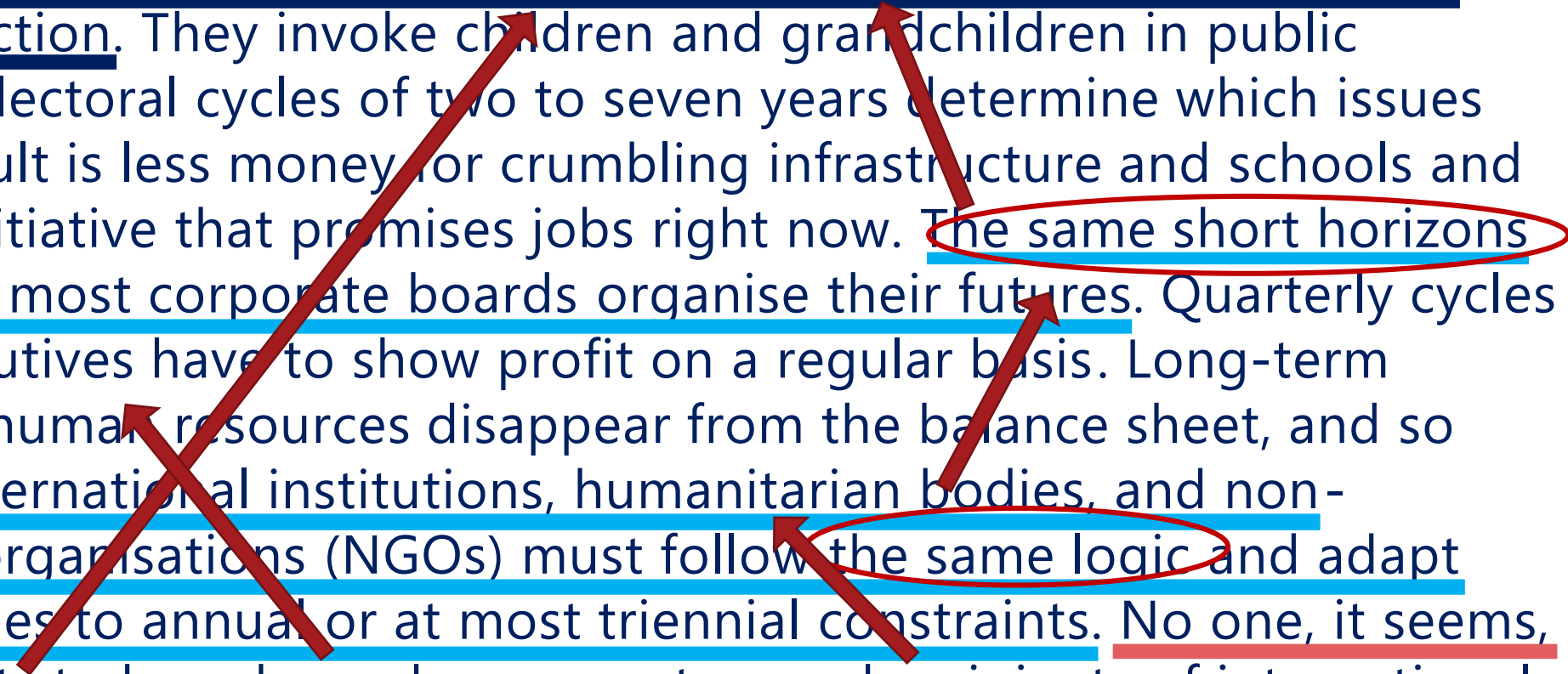
Indeed, the world around us is hungry for long-term thinking. In political science departments and over dinner tables, citizens around the world complain about political stagnation and the limits of two-party systems. A lack of serious alternatives to laissez-faire capitalism is the hallmark of contemporary world governance from the World Bank to the WTO. Currencies, nations, and sea-levels fall and rise. Even the professions in advanced economies that garnered the most secure jobs a generation ago are no longer stable. What sort of an education prepares individuals for so volatile a run through the journey of life? How does a young person come to learn not only to listen and to communicate, but also to judge institutions, to see which technologies hold promise and which are doomed to fail, to think fluidly about state and market and the connections between both? And how can they do so with an eye to where we have come from, as well as where we are going to?

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The diagram consists of several red arrows and circles. One arrow points from the bottom left towards the phrase 'children and grandchildren'. Another arrow points from the bottom left towards the phrase 'international institutions, humanitarian bodies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)'. A third arrow points from the bottom right towards the phrase 'The same short horizons'. A fourth arrow points from the bottom right towards the phrase 'the same logic'. Two red circles highlight the phrases 'The same short horizons' and 'the same logic'.



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Strategies

Apply **reading strategies**

Before reading strategies

While reading strategies

After reading strategies

Before reading strategies

- Establish a purpose for **why** you should read.
- **Predict the content** of the text based on abstract, title etc.
 - ✓ Look at the title, headline, any sub-headings, photos or illustrations.
 - ✓ Activate **background knowledge**.
- Read any potential questions first.
- Decide how to read the text: **skim, scan, read for detail** or **a combination**.
- ALWAYS skim to understand the **main idea** (speed reading – topic sentences).

While reading strategies

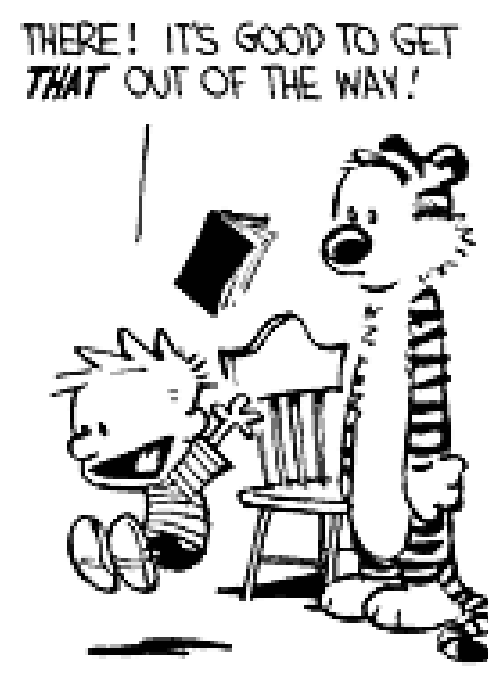
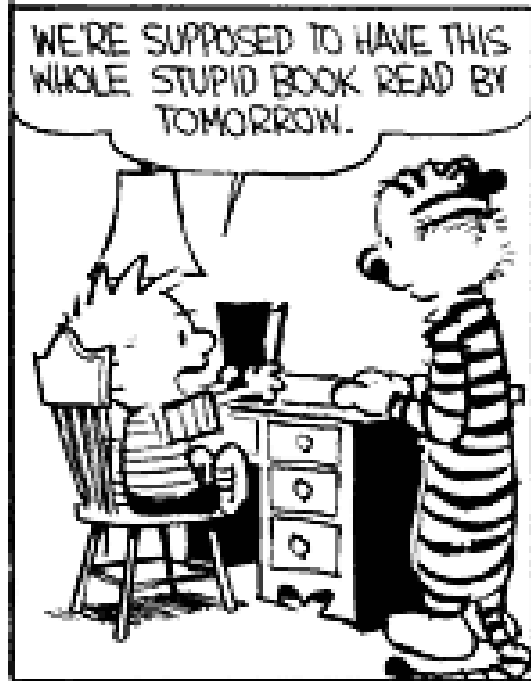
- Pay attention to **topic sentences and structure**.
- Predict the **main idea** based on the text's different sections/structure.
- Note down **important information**.
- Find **answers to questions**.
- Determine the meaning of **unknown words** based on the context. **Maintain the flow** of reading!!! → Dare to **ignore** unknown words.
- Look up **essential** words in a **dictionary** – but use the dictionary as little as possible



After reading strategies

- Answer questions about the text – be **precise**.
- Review **notes** and **summarise** main points.
- **Reflect** on what you have learned from the text: **agree/disagree – be critical! Connect** to previously read material.
- Make a list (word cards) of **new words** you think will be useful in the future:

Break



4. The Importance of a Large Vocabulary

How many words to learn?

Daily conversation

2000 – 3000

Read authentic texts

5000

Read discipline-specific texts

5000 + tech vocab.

Function in English at an advanced level in a variety of university situations

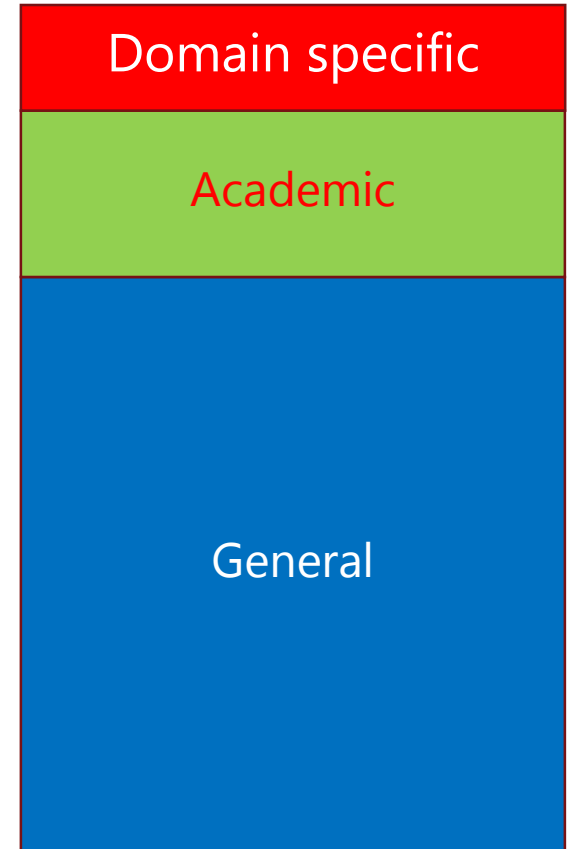
10000

Average 5-year old knows (L1)

4000 - 5000

Different kinds of vocabulary

- General words – most common 3,000 *e.g. plant, name, place, voice*
- Domain-specific terms *e.g. undernourishment, anemia, carcinogenic, carbohydrates, codification*
- Academic Word List (AWL) *e.g. analysis, deviate, abandon, confirm*



Check words on OALD:

<http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>

Academic Word List link:

<http://www.uefap.com/vocab/select/awl.htm>

The most ambitious diagnosis of short-termism to date came from the Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations. In October 2013, a blue-ribbon panel chaired by Pascal Lamy, former Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), issued its report, *Now for the Long Term*, 'focusing on the increasing short-termism of modern politics and our collective inability to break the gridlock which undermines attempts to address the biggest challenges that will shape our future'. Though the tone of the report was hardly upbeat, its thrust was forward-looking and future-oriented. Its motto might have been the words quoted in its introduction and attributed to former French premier Pierre Mendès France: *gouverner, c'est prévoir* – to govern is to foresee.³

Imagining the long term as an alternative to the short term may not be so difficult, but putting long-termism into practice may be harder to achieve. When institutions or individuals want to peer into the future, there is a dearth of knowledge about how to go about this task. Instead of facts, we routinely resort to theories. We have been told, for instance, that there was an end to history and that the world is hot, flat, and crowded.⁴ We have read that all human events are reducible to models derived from physics, translated by economics or political science, or explained by a theory of evolution that looks back to our hunter-gatherer ancestors. Editorials apply economic models to sumo wrestlers and palaeolithic anthropology to customs of dating.⁵ These lessons are repeated on the news, and their proponents are elevated to the status of public intellectuals. Their rules seem to point to unchanging levers that govern our world. But they do little to explain the shifting hierarchy of economies or the changes in gender identity and reconfigurations of banking witnessed in our own time. Only in rare conversations does anyone notice that there are long-term changes flowing around us, ones that are relevant and possible to see. The world around us is clearly one of change, irreducible to models. Who is trained to steadily wait upon and translate them for others, these vibrations of deeper time?

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Category	Tokens	%
K1 Words (1-1000):	267	73.76%
K2 Words (1001-2000):	23	6.35%
AWL Words (academic):	29	8.01%
Off-List Words:	<u>43</u>	<u>11.88%</u>

5. Reading & Note-taking

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEIn3T6nDAo>

Rael (2004) retrieved from <https://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/>

Reading and note-taking should be a symbiotic relationship:

1. **Never copy literally** what you want to remember. You don't learn anything -> Danger of plagiarism.
2. Remember to ask yourself **the purpose** of reading -> take notes based on your decision!
3. **Avoid highlighting** -> a passive approach to the text. Studies have shown that students don't learn the material as effectively as when they take notes.
4. The goal of your notes is to write/study on the basis of them -> make sure they are **readable**

5. **Always separate your opinion and the authors'.**

6. ALWAYS **keep the references** of your sources.

7. If you need to know a text in detail – **page-by-page notes** are useful, but most time consuming.

- write down the reference of the text/article/monograph
- jot down the page numbers so you can quickly go back to the text if necessary
- create a short summary of what is relevant in each paragraph (if necessary)
- try to encapsulate opinions – add your own!
- highlight sentences which you want to use as quotes
- summarize the entire chapter/article/text
- agree/disagree and relate to other material

For every monograph, essay or article in history you read, create a short summary covering these three elements:

1. The author's argument(s)
2. A general sense of the evidence the author used, along with a few specific examples
3. Your critical reaction – what are the strengths/ what are the weaknesses



6. Sources

1. What is wrong with Wikipedia?

2. How to evaluate Web sources?

- *Who is the author of this site? (Be skeptical – Credentials?) (gov.- edu.- org. – com?)*
- *How accurate and objective is the site?*
- *What is the site's currency and coverage?*

3. Questions to ask about all sources

- *What are the author's credentials? (Journal articles? Books?)*
- *What is the purpose of the source (Scholarly - Personal reply?)*
- *What is the scope of the source? (What does it cover, depth?)*
- *Who published the source? (Independent? Biased?)*
- *How current is the source? (When was it written – Relevant?)*

7. Study groups

- Think about what you want to get from the group – voice this
- Think about what you can offer the group – voice this

- Appoint a facilitator to keep on track – rotating?
- Assign each other readings to summarize / analyze each week
- Listen to each other (different perspectives)
- Be patient – it takes time to learn to work together
- Write summaries together – share your notes
- Create word lists / bilingual glossaries

8. It is Not a Murder Mystery...

1. Ask for the goal of the selected reading material.
2. Ask about expectations for the text (how are students supposed to read?)
3. Ask how to read the material.
4. Ask an outline of the text if possible.
 1. What is the gist of the text?
 2. What are the main arguments?
 3. What is the outline of the material.
 4. Who is the author and is it important?
 5. If slides clarify the text, post them on beforehand
 6. ...
5. Ask how the text is related to other material
6. ...



Workshop 1

Please bring your texts to the workshops!

Avner - Rerooting the Faith: The Reformation as re-Christianization

Helle - America's Constitution - en historisk indføring i det amerikanske politiske og juridiske system

Ulrik - Reading publics: transformations of the literary public sphere

Kasper – Woman and Gender in the Form Romanum

Don't be discouraged!
Reading effectively is a work in process!



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