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SECOND EDITION

STUDY

skills in English

A course in reading skills for academic purposes

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UNIT 1

Improving reading efficiency

This unit aims to help you to:

- 1 read more actively
- 2 read in a more focused way
- 3 read in a more time-efficient way
- 4 read with greater understanding
- 5 read more critically.

Active reading

Reading with a purpose

Reading plays a key role in almost every course of study. Yet many students do their reading in an unfocused way. This can often lead to poor results. So let us start by trying to clarify our ideas about reading.

TASK 1 Reasons for reading

- 1 Think of as many reasons for reading a book as you can.
- 2 Which of them would you describe as academic reasons?
- 3 Is there any connection between your purpose in reading a book (or an article) and the way that you read it? Should there be?

(For discussion of this task, see Key.)

Predicting: study the title

Using the title

Read the information below and then do Task 2.

The titles of books or articles can be very helpful to you, if you want to read in a more focused and efficient way. Usually, the titles of academic books or articles are factual and informative: they can almost be taken as very brief summaries of the contents of the text. So you can help focus your reading by asking yourself questions like:

- In what way is this text relevant to me, or to what I'm trying to do?
- What sort of questions do I expect this text to answer?

These questions that you ask yourself before you read a text are sometimes called *anticipation questions*.

Titles can be helpful in another way. Sometimes, when you are reading through a bibliography, you have to make a decision, on the basis of the title alone, as to whether a book or article is going to be helpful to you. Here, again, you have to ask yourself questions such as those above.

TASK 2 Using titles of texts

This task practises anticipating the content of a text by reading the title.

- 1 Choose *three* of the following titles from the journal *Geography* and, for each title, write down two anticipation questions that the article might answer.
 - a) 'Global warming and extreme weather: a cautionary note.'
(By Greg O'Hare. *Geography*, Vol. 84(1), Jan. 1999, pp 87–91.)
 - b) 'Six billion and counting: trends and prospects for global population at the beginning of the twenty-first century.'
(By Hazel Barrett. *Geography*, Vol. 85(2), April 2000, pp 107–120.)
 - c) 'Unconstrained growth: the development of a Spanish tourist resort.'
(By John Pollard and Rafael Dominguez Rodriguez. *Geography*, Vol. 80(1), Jan. 1995, pp 33–44.)
 - d) 'Age concern? The geography of a greying Europe.'
(By Stephen Jackson. *Geography*, Vol. 85(4), October 2000, pp 366–369.)
 - e) 'Changing responses to water resource problems in England and Wales.'
(By Rick Cryer. *Geography*, Vol. 80(1), Jan. 1995, pp 45–57.)
- 2 If you are in a group, compare your anticipation questions. How much overlap was there in the kind of information the members of the group expected?
- 3 Now look at the outline summaries of the articles in the Key. How good were you, individually or as a group, at anticipating the sort of information the articles would contain?

Skimming, scanning and searching

- Efficient readers do not always read every word. To save time, they use techniques like skimming, scanning and searching.
- When we *skim* through a text, we are reading it quickly to get an overall impression of the text.
- When we are *scanning* or *searching* a text we are looking for specific information which we know, or suspect, is there.

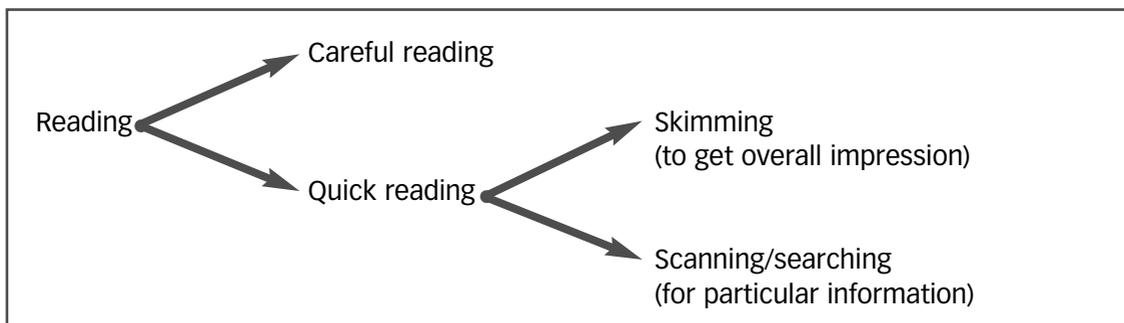


Figure 1.1 Reading strategies [This diagram is based on the analysis of reading processes presented in: Sandy Urquhart and Cyril Weir (1998) *Reading in a Second Language: Process, Product and Practice* (Longman)]

Skimming

Another useful way of building up anticipation, so that you can ask yourself the right kind of questions, is by *skimming* through the text. Whether the book is a set text or borrowed from a library, think of it as a *tool for learning* that is supposed to help you to master your subject. In that respect, you may want to know the answers to:

- How useful is this book and in what way? (Evaluation)
- Where is the information I need located in it? (Orientation)

The parts of a book that may be useful for evaluation and orientation

These parts include the:

reviewers' comments (often also found quoted on the book-jacket; but remember, only good reviews will be quoted!)

foreword or preface

contents page

printing history (this shows when the book was first published, reprinted or a new edition issued – usually printed on a page called the *imprint page*, immediately after the title page).

A careful look through the **index** should also tell you a lot about the content of a book – we will be discussing the index in the next section.

TASK 3 Evaluating the potential usefulness of a text

This task gives you some practice in evaluating the possible usefulness of a book and finding your way around it. The extracts on the pages that follow are taken from a book called *The Psychology of Happiness* by Michael Argyle. See if you can use this information to find out more about the book.

- 1 What is the author's academic position? Is his position relevant to the subject matter of the book?
- 2 When was the book first published? Has anything been done to update it since then?
- 3 What audience or audiences does the book seem to be suitable for? Has the author any experience, do you think, of knowing the needs of the possible target audience(s)?
 - a) What would you say might be the particular strengths of this book for beginner students of Psychology?
 - b) If you were a general reader interested in finding out what you could do to make yourself happier, which chapter(s) might you be tempted to read first?
 - c) If you were a student whose major subject was Economics, which chapters do you think you might find especially relevant for you?

The Psychology of Happiness

2nd Edition

Michael Argyle

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by Methuen & Co. Ltd
First edition reprinted 1989, 1993
by Routledge

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Preface

The first edition of this book was published in 1987, when the field of happiness research was quite young. Since then it has expanded enormously. A lot of new work has appeared in the journal *Social Indicators Research*, *The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and in *Personality and Individual Differences*. Veenhoven produced a reanalysis of surveys from around the world, *Correlates of Happiness* (1994). Kahneman, Diener and Schwarz edited their equally massive *Well-Being: The Foundation of Hedonic Psychology* (1999), in which I have a chapter. Happiness and well-being research is now published mainly in psychological journals. However, economists have also taken an increasing interest in this topic, through their concern with whether money makes people happy, and the effects of unemployment. Governments too have started to take an interest.

Since the first edition of this book I have been carrying out research and writing on some of the central topics of the present book, and this has helped me to rewrite some chapters. During this period I produced books on the *Social Psychology of Work* (2nd edition) (1989), *The Social Psychology of Leisure* (1996) and *Psychology and Religion: An Introduction* (2000).

I have been greatly helped by Peter Hills, Professor Adrian Furnham and Professor Peter Robinson, who read and commented on the whole manuscript. I am indebted to students, especially at Oxford Brookes University, some of whom have done empirical projects in this area. Two conferences have been very useful, one organised by Kahneman at Princeton in connection with the Well-Being book, the other at Nuffield College, organised by Professor Avner Offer and others.

Several libraries have been very helpful, especially the Radcliffe Science Library and the PPE Reading room, New Bodleian at Oxford.

June 2000
Oxford Brookes University

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What is happiness?

Why are some people happier than others?

This new edition of *The Psychology of Happiness* provides a comprehensive and up-to-date account of research into the nature of happiness. Major research developments have occurred since publication of the first edition in 1987 – here they are brought together for the first time, often with surprising conclusions.

Drawing on research from the disciplines of sociology, physiology and economics as well as psychology, Michael Argyle explores the nature of positive and negative emotions, and the psychological and cognitive processes involved in their generation. Accessible and wide-ranging coverage is provided on key issues such as: the measurement and study of happiness; the effect of friendship, marriage and other relationships on positive moods; happiness, mental and physical health; the effects of work, employment and leisure; and the effects of money, class and education. The importance of individual personality traits such as optimism, purpose in life, internal control and having the right kind of goals is also analysed. New to this edition is additional material on national differences, the role of humour, money, and the effect of religion. Are some countries happier than others? This is just one of the controversial issues addressed by the author along the way.

Finally the book discusses the practical application of research in this area, such as how happiness can be enhanced, and the effects of happiness on health, altruism and sociability. This definitive and thought-provoking work will be compulsive reading for students, researchers and the interested general reader.

This new edition is an excellent updated synthesis of the research in what has been a very successful area of advance in social psychology, due in no small measure to Michael Argyle's own work in the field.' W. Peter Robinson, *Professor of Social Psychology, University of Bristol*

This book is bigger and better than the first edition. The author has definitely kept up with the progress in the field and has summarised it well.' Adrian Furnham, *Professor of Psychology, University College London*

'Michael Argyle's book gives an excellent broad overview of the scientific field of subjective well-being – the study of happiness, life satisfaction, and positive affect. Readers will discover many interesting, and even exciting, new facts about happiness. At the same time, this is not a difficult read... Argyle has done an outstanding job of introducing readers to an exciting new scientific field in the study of human behaviour.' Ed Diener, *Professor of Psychology, University of Illinois*

Michael Argyle is Emeritus Reader in Social Psychology at Oxford University, a Fellow of Wolfson College and Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Oxford Brookes University. He is the author of many books including: *The Social Psychology of Everyday Life* (1992), *The Psychology of Social Class* (1993), *The Psychology of Money* (1998) and *Psychology and Religion* (1999), all published by Routledge.

Using the index

Study the information below and then do Task 4.

The main purpose of an index is to enable you to locate specific information quickly and efficiently.

It can also tell you a lot about the content covered in a book.

Sometimes a book will have, for example, a 'subject index' (that is, topics covered) and an 'author index' (that is, the authors of books referred to in the text).

If you cannot find a reference in the index for a particular word or phrase, try thinking of a likely synonym (that is, a word which means the same, or almost the

same) or a word that is related in meaning in some other way (for example, if you could not find a reference for **chair**, you could try a more general word like **furniture**, and vice versa).

Abbreviations and unusual words are sometimes used in indexes, such as: the abbreviation **f. or ff.**, (sometimes without the full-stop) meaning 'and the pages which follow'; and the Latin word **passim** meaning 'throughout the book/article' or 'throughout the specified section of the book/article'.

TASK 4 Using the index

On the next page, you will find the subject index of *The Psychology of Happiness*. Use the index to answer the following questions.

- 1 What pages might you refer to if you were interested in the connection between health and happiness?
- 2 If you were a student of Economics, which pages might you find helpful?
- 3 Let us suppose you were interested in reading about a possible connection between how much people earn (their earnings) and how happy they are. You will see there is no entry in the index under *earnings*. Can you think of a possible useful synonym?
- 4 Do you think that people feel happier when it is sunny? Does this book discuss this issue? (You may have to check the index under a related word.)
- 5 If you were interested in studying possible connections between how happy people are and which countries they come from, which pages might you want to look at?

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Surveying a text's beginnings and endings

Below are some more tips on how to quickly survey a text.

Read through the following tips – on using first and last chapters and surveying articles and chapters – think about whether they will be useful for you, then do Task 5.

Using first and last chapters of books

We have been looking at some ways in which you can do a quick survey of a book by skimming through it. Other parts of a book worth looking at are the first chapter and the last chapter.

In the first chapter, the author sometimes outlines what topics he is going to deal with in the book, why he is interested in those topics and how he is going to deal with them. This information can give you ideas about how useful the book is going to be to you, and possibly also on which parts of the book you are going to concentrate.

The last chapter is often invaluable for survey purposes, because the writer may summarise his main arguments and list his conclusions. This may sometimes be all you need to know! At the very least, knowing where the author's argument is heading should make it easier for you to understand the book. So make a habit of looking at the last chapter first!

Surveying journal articles and book chapters

- At the beginning of many journal articles, and also occasionally at the beginning of chapters in books, you will find an abstract of the article or chapter. If the abstract has been properly written, it should give a helpful summary of the content of the article/chapter. This is obviously extremely useful, so abstracts should be read very carefully.
- Just as it is useful to look at the beginning and ending of a book, it is also usually helpful to read *the first and last paragraphs* in the article or chapter, and for the same reasons.

.....
:
TASK 5 Predicting and surveying

The title of the next passage is 'Malaria – a new threat'.

- 1 Malaria has been a threat to humanity for thousands of years, but here it is called a new threat. Have you any ideas to explain the title?
- 2 Now quickly survey the passage by reading the first and last paragraphs. (These paragraphs have been printed in *italics*.) Then see if you can answer the question: Why does the writer call malaria a new threat? If you are in a group, compare your answers.

- 3 Read quickly through the whole passage to see if you can find the answers to the questions below. **Time yourself** by noting your starting time and finishing time and checking your reading speed (see the Reading speed chart that follows the Key). Write down your answers to the questions. If you are in a group, compare your answers.
- What two ways have been tried to prevent the mosquitoes from using their breeding grounds?
 - What ingenious modern method of ‘biological engineering’ has been used against the mosquito?
 - Can you find three other methods that have been used to combat malaria?
 - What two methods are not as effective as they used to be?

Malaria

— a new threat

Malaria has been the scourge of humanity since the earliest times, and there are ominous signs that it is fighting back against modern science. In this short article, we will be looking at the advances that have been made in the fight against malaria in modern times. We will also be discussing why, in spite of these advances, malaria has still not been eradicated, and in some ways, poses a greater threat to humanity than ever.

The first great breakthrough in the treatment of malaria was the discovery by Sir Ronald Ross, during the period 1895–98, that the disease was transmitted by the female *Anopheles* mosquito. Then Giovanni Grassi worked out the life cycle of the human malaria parasite. With the connection between malaria and the mosquito clearly established, steps could be taken to fight the disease.

One method was to attack the breeding places of the mosquito. It was known that

mosquitoes lay their eggs in water. So, in malaria infested areas work was started on draining marshes and stagnant pools, and trying to ensure generally that there were no areas of water where mosquitoes could breed. Where areas of still water could not be drained, they were sometimes covered with oil or detergent, which made them unusable by the mosquitoes.

One of the most interesting methods of preventing mosquitoes from multiplying

is to introduce a different variety of mosquito into an area: when the two varieties mate, the females are infertile. This kind of 'biological engineering' has had some limited success in the field, but it is not always possible to reproduce laboratory conditions in real life. Since there are over 2,600 different kinds of mosquitoes, the research problems are enormous.

The most obvious and easiest method of prevention is to use wire screens and mosquito netting to prevent people being bitten. But this may not always be possible in poor areas, and does not help when people are moving about. Then people have to cover up and/or use some kind of protective cream or spray.

A more flexible method is to take preventive drugs such as quinine. This drug was at one time extremely widely used, but during the Second World War most of the supply areas fell to the Japanese and alternative methods had to be found in the West. These drugs proved to be more effective in many ways, and the use of quinine tailed away. Recently, however, there have been indications that certain varieties of malaria germs are becoming more resistant to modern drugs, and quinine is coming into use once more.

At one time it seemed that insecticides, especially DDT, might wipe out malaria completely. One of the most successful DDT campaigns was carried out in India. In 1952, at the beginning of the campaign, seventy-five million Indians a year suffered from malaria. By 1965, the spraying of DDT had reduced the number of cases to 100,000.

However, as with the malaria germ and preventive drugs, there is evidence that mosquitoes are developing resistance to DDT. One of the reasons for this has been the initial success of the operation. People became careless. Also, owing to increases in the price of fuel, poorer countries found it impossible to maintain the eradication programme. The situation now is that malaria is staging a comeback, and there are new breeds of mosquito which are resistant to DDT.

So we see that there are various methods of fighting malaria. They involve: preventing mosquitoes from breeding; preventing mosquitoes from having the opportunity to bite people; using protective drugs; and using insecticides. Dangerous new developments are that some malaria germs are developing a resistance to modern drugs and the mosquitoes themselves are becoming resistant to insecticides.

[622 words]

[NOTE This text on Malaria will be referred to elsewhere in this book. You may find it convenient to photocopy it and you have permission to do so.]

Other skimming techniques

- Quickly skim through any titles/subtitles in the text.
- Read text selectively. Pay particular attention to the way the paragraphs begin and end.
- There is the saying 'A picture is worth a thousand words': look out for helpful diagrams that summarise what the writer is saying.

The task which follows relates to an article by David Crystal. I want you to get a general idea of what the author has to say, using (where appropriate) the techniques we have been discussing in this unit.

TASK 6 Skimming

- 1 The title of the article is 'A Linguistic Revolution: Language and the Internet'. Begin by thinking about the title. What sort of topics do you think the writer will be dealing with?
- 2 Skim through the article. Then answer this question: What are the *main points that the writer is making about language and the Internet?* (You should come up with at least two.)
- 3 (*Careful reading*) Now read the article straight through at your normal reading speed (not forgetting to **time yourself!**).

When you have read the passage through see if you can give a more complete answer to question 2 above. Your answer should be in the form of a summary of between 100 and 200 words long. (If you are with a group, compare your summaries.)

A Linguistic Revolution: *Language and the Internet*

DAVID CRYSTAL

A linguist cannot help but be impressed by the Internet. It is an extraordinarily diverse medium, holding a mirror up to many sides of our linguistic nature. The World Wide Web, in particular, offers a home to virtually all the styles that have so far developed in the English language—newspapers, scientific reports, bulletins, novels, poems, prayers – you name it, you'll

find a page on it. Indeed, it is introducing us to styles of written expression which none of us have ever seen before. It has often been said the Internet is a revolution – yes, indeed, but it is also a linguistic revolution.

The Internet is not a single thing. It consists of several domains – e-mails, the World Wide Web, chat-rooms (those which exist in real time and those which

do not) and the world of fantasy games. Each offers us possibilities of human communication which I think can genuinely be called revolutionary.

In e-mails, what is revolutionary is not the way some of its users are cavalier about their typing accuracy, permitting misspellings, and omitting capitalization and punctuation. This is a rather minor effect, which rarely interferes with intelligibility. It is patently a special style arising out of the pressures operating on users of the medium, plus a natural desire (especially among younger – or younger-minded – users) to be idiosyncratic and daring. There is nothing truly revolutionary here.

What is revolutionary about e-mails is the way the medium permits what is called *framing*. You receive a message which contains, say, three different points in a single paragraph. You can, if you want, reply to each of these points by taking the paragraph, splitting it up into three parts, and then responding to each part separately, so that the message you send back then looks a bit like a play dialogue. Then, your sender can do the same thing to your responses, and when you get the message back, you see his replies to your replies. You can then send the lot onto someone else for further comments, and when it comes back there are now three voices framed on the screen. And so it can go on – replies within replies within replies – all unified within the same screen typography. There's never been anything like this in the history of human written communication.

The pages of the Web offer a different kind of revolutionary development. The one thing we can say about traditional writing is that it is permanent. You open a book at page 6, close the book, then open it at page 6 again. You expect to see the same thing. You would be more than a little surprised if the page had changed in the interim. But this kind of impermanence is perfectly normal on the Web – where indeed you can see the page changing in front of your eyes. Words appear and disappear, in varying colours. Sentences slide onto the screen and off again. Letters dance before your eyes. The Web is truly part of a new, animated linguistic channel – more dynamic than traditional writing, and more permanent than traditional speech. It is neither speech nor writing. It is a new medium.

Real-time Internet discussion groups – chatrooms – also offer a revolutionary set of possibilities. You see on your screen messages coming in from all over the world. If there are 30 people in the room, then you could be seeing 30 different messages, all making various contributions to the theme, but often clustering into half a dozen or more sub-conversations. It has never been possible before in the history of human communication, to 'listen' to 30 people at once. Now you can. Moreover, you can respond to as many of them as your mental powers and typing speed permit. This too is a revolutionary state of affairs, as far as speech is concerned.

But there is a further reason for the revolutionary status of the Internet – the fact that it offers a home to all languages – as soon as their communities have a functioning computer technology. Its increasingly multilingual character has been the most notable change since it started out – not very long ago – as a totally English medium. By the mid-1990s, a widely-quoted figure was that about 80% of the Internet was in English.

Since then, estimates for English have been steadily falling. Some commentators are now predicting that before long the Web (and the Internet as a whole) will be predominantly *non-English*, as communications infrastructure develops in Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. A recent Global Reach survey estimated that people's Internet access in non-English-speaking countries increased between 1995 and 2000 from 7 million to 136 million. In 1998, there was another surprise: the number of newly-created Websites not in English passed the total for newly-created Websites that were in English. In certain countries, the local language is already dominant. According to one Japanese Internet author, Yoshi Mikami, 90% of Web pages in Japan are already in Japanese.

My feeling is that the future looks good for Web multilingualism. The Web offers a World Wide Welcome for global linguistic diversity. [844 words]

[Adapted from David Crystal (2001) *Language and the Internet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). This is a shortened version of an article which first appeared in the *SATEFL Newsletter* 21/2 (Winter, 2001): 5–7.]

Scanning and searching

To remind yourself of the various approaches to reading a text, you may find it helpful to have another look at Figure 1.1. Then study the tips below and apply them to Task 7.

- When you are **scanning** you are usually looking for a particular word or phrase which you believe already exists (or may exist) in the text.
- Sometimes – if you are lucky – the key words you are looking for are signalled in some way, for example by being written in *italics* or in **bold**.
- When you are **searching** a text for particular information, you may not have specific words or phrases to help you. However, you may, as we have seen, sometimes get help from the index, or from the list of contents.

TASK 7 Scanning and searching

Scan and search these three entries taken from the Cambridge Encyclopedia in order to answer the questions that follow. Remember, you don't have to read the whole entry.

1 acupuncture

acupuncture (Lat *acus* 'needle' + *punctura* 'piercing') A medical practice known in China for over 3000 years, which has come to attract attention in the West. It consists of the insertion into the skin and underlying tissues of fine needles, usually made of steel, and of varying lengths according to the depth of the target point. The site of insertion of each needle is selected according to the points and meridians related to the tissue or organ believed to be disordered, and several hundred specific points have been identified. Areas which are painful on pressure may also be selected ('trigger point' acupuncture).

Studies are now in progress to establish which disorders benefit from acupuncture, but neuralgia, migraine, sprains, and asthma are claimed to respond, while infectious diseases and tumours are unlikely to do so. It is also employed as an analgesic during surgery in the Far East, where skills in local or general anaesthesia are often not easily available. Today, acupuncture is used widely among the general population in China; equipment can be purchased in shops, and used in the way simple pain killers are employed in the West. The efficacy of the method is now being subjected to statistically-controlled trials, but accounts of successes remain anecdotal. Its mechanism of action is also unknown. In the terms of Chinese philosophy it is believed to restore the balance of the contrasting principles of *yin* and *yang*, and the flow of *Qi* in hypothetical channels of the body (*meridians*). Research has shown that brain tissue contains morphine-like substances called *endorphins*, which may be released in increased amounts when deep sensory nerves are stimulated by injury near the body surfaces. A possible mode of action therefore is that these substances are released by acupuncture, and some degree of tranquillity and analgesia is induced. >> alternative medicine; auricular therapy; moxibustion; tradition Chinese medicine; yin and yang

- (*scanning*) What are endorphins ?
- (*searching*) Where was acupuncture first used? How long has it been used there?