

# 1 Text Processing Strategies

## Identifying reading purposes and reading strategies

**1** Ask the students if they would read the texts in the same or in different ways. A very general question like this should elicit distinctions about *text types*, *reading contexts/purposes* and *reading strategies*. In this way, remind the students of the principle that different reading strategies apply not only to different texts, but also to the same text when approached for different purposes. If you wish, you can refer the students to their daily experience with L1 texts.

**2/3** Exercise 2 is designed to show that different strategies can be used with the same text according to different reading purposes. Let the students do the exercise, then ask them to describe *how* they have read the article to find the answers to each part (A, B and C). Let them describe the steps they have followed in their own words, but ensure that the differences between the strategies are clearly understood. You can introduce some terms like *scanning*, *skimming* and *intensive reading*. The term *extensive reading* could be used to identify a way of reading at one's own pace, with no particular explicit purpose in mind (e.g. reading for pleasure). These terms will be useful when discussing the next exercise.

KEY A. 17; on Tuesday night; Tom Fraser B. b) a) d) c) C. 1T 2T 3F 4F 5T 6T

**4** It is important that the students should discuss the possible strategies *before* doing the tasks, so that they become aware of how *advance planning* can help them to get a preliminary overview of a task and to select appropriate ways of dealing with it. *After* doing the tasks, the students should briefly report on the strategies they have actually used and on how useful they have been.

### SUGGESTED KEY

#### Strategies

- A. Intensive
- B. Scanning + intensive
- C. Extensive + skimming
- D. Scanning
- E. First, scanning; then, intensive

#### Tasks

- B. Use the *Word underline* option.
- D. On page 23.
- E. 1. The kinetic theory of molecules; fractional distillation in industry. 2. To separate the different molecules.

### 5 KEY

- 1. 4
- 2. Sportswear
- 3. Yes (in the *Review* section), except videos
- 4. a) 101 b) 91-92

### 6 KEY 1. No 2. No 3. Yes

**7** The dramatized version should help the students to appreciate the strong emotional impact of the story. The questions in Parts A/B/C are best answered in pairs or small groups, with a whole class discussion at the end. The students should always be prompted to refer to the text to justify their answers, so that their choices and opinions are firmly based on evidence and can be shared more easily.

This short story is typical of Roald Dahl's taste for the irony and the unexpected: the newborn baby turns out to be Adolf Hitler – the woman's only child who, ironically, manages to survive. The story is taken from a collection of short stories, *Kiss Kiss*, Penguin Books. For more information on Roald Dahl, see Lesson 4C in the *Course Book*.

### TAPESCRIPT

*Listen and answer the questions in your book.*

DOCTOR: Everything is normal. Just lie back and relax.

You have a son.

WOMAN: What?

DOCTOR: You have a fine son. You understand that, don't you? A fine son. Did you hear him crying?

WOMAN: Is he all right, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Of course he is all right.

WOMAN: Please let me see him.

DOCTOR: You'll see him in a moment.

WOMAN: You are certain he is all right?

DOCTOR: I am quite certain.

WOMAN: Is he still crying?

DOCTOR: Try to rest. There is nothing to worry about.

WOMAN: Why has he stopped crying, Doctor? What happened?

DOCTOR: Don't excite yourself, please. Everything is normal.

WOMAN: I want to see him. Please let me see him.

DOCTOR: Dear lady, you have a fine strong healthy child. Don't you believe me when I tell you that?

WOMAN: What is the woman over there doing to him?

DOCTOR: Your baby is being made to look pretty for you. We are giving him a little wash, that is all. You must spare us a moment or two for that.

WOMAN: You swear he is all right?

DOCTOR: I swear it. Now lie back and relax. Close your eyes. Go on, close your eyes. That's right. That's better. Good girl ...

WOMAN: I have prayed and prayed that he will live, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Of course he will live. What are you talking about?

WOMAN: The others didn't.

DOCTOR: What?

WOMAN: None of my other ones lived, Doctor.

### 8 KEY

- 1. Heat the oil.
- 2. Faster; the light ones.
- 3. The bottom; kerosine, because its molecules leave the oil later (kerosine is found at a lower, i.e. warmer, level in the column).



## 2 Text Processing Strategies

### Predicting

*Reading as a process of predicting* is a principle that often goes against students' beliefs and attitudes towards language and language learning: their previous learning experience may have led them to form wrong assumptions, which could be difficult to change. When asking them to consider this issue, therefore, we should take beliefs and attitudes, and not just previous knowledge and ability, into careful consideration. You can start the session

- by directly asking the students to «try their hand» at predicting, by doing Exercises 1 to 4, and then do the feedback/discussion activity (Exercise 5), or
- you can first briefly elicit from the students how they think they approach an (L2 or even L1) text: do they tend to read word by word? If they do, why? If they don't, what do they do instead, and why? Is there any difference in their approach to L1 and L2 texts?

See if you can lead the students to consider the basic fact that the *visual* (i.e. typographical) information is only part of what is needed to decode a text – the other, vital part being what a reader brings to it (his/her previous knowledge, expectations, etc.). This explains why our eyes don't need to read letter by letter, word by word (this would be an extremely lengthy process) but tend to take in the text in «clusters» (groups of words). The exercises in this section are designed to demonstrate in more detail the *kinds of knowledge* the reader brings to a text – in other words, the sources of information he/she uses to *predict while reading*. (Note that the strategies that can be used to predict the *content* and *organization* of a text *before reading it*, i.e. *anticipating* and *previewing* strategies, will be dealt more extensively in Unit 3, *Text Processing Strategies* section).

**1-5** The basic kinds of information and previous knowledge that a reader uses to avoid reading letter by letter, word by word are

- *orthographic*, i.e. knowledge of the spelling rules (Exercises 1/2);
- *grammatical*, i.e. what we know about the form of words (morphology – Exercise 2) and how they combine together in sentences (syntax – Exercise 3). This helps us to decide if in a specific context an unknown word is likely to be, e.g. a noun or an adjective;
- *semantic*, i.e. knowledge of the world, which allows us to assign a particular meaning to a word in the context where it appears (Exercises 3/4).

Another source of information (the ability to recognize the *organization* of texts) will be considered in Ex. 6 to 9.

Make it clear that these different sources of information always work together, at the same time and in «real time» in the reader's mind.

#### GLOSSARY for Exercise 4/Text 1

*hickory* = a North American tree which bears nuts

*squash* = any of a group of large solid vegetables (e.g. pumpkins)

*skunk* = a small black and white American animal which produces a bad-smelling substance to defend itself

*butte* = an isolated hill, with steep sides and a flat top

*corral* = an enclosed space where cattle or horses are kept

*chaparral* = low evergreen oaks or thorny shrubs

*mesa* = a plateau with steep sides

*rattlesnake* = an American snake that makes a rattling noise with its tail

*mockingbird* = an American bird that imitates the songs of other birds

#### KEY to Exercise 1

1. Dictionary 2. Immediately 3. Information 4. Automatic 5. American English 6. Football player 7. Merry Christmas 8. The next step/stop 9. Thank you very much

#### KEY to Exercise 2

*Examples:* swimming/swimmer/swims; clearly/clearance/clearing; imperative/imperfect/imperial/ impersonal; postal/postcard/poster/postpone; indicate/indifferent/indigestion/indirect/indistinct/individual; playback/played/player/playing; elect/electric/elegant/element/elephant/elevator/eleven

#### SUGGESTED KEY to Exercise 3

1. beautiful 2. production 3. tropical 4. completely 5. something 6. proclaimed 7. industry 8. parallel

#### SUGGESTED KEY to Exercise 4

*Text 1:* 1. British 2. very 3. A 4. difference 5. had 6. ones/names 7. or 8. they 9. names

*Text 2:* 1. old 2. he 3. they 4. having 5. that 6. his 7. a 8. the 9. who 10. were

*Text 3 (Photostory):* 1. Is 2. calling 3. his 4. message 5. he 6. Have 7. number 8. terrible 9. speak 10. tell 11. can 12. do

**6/7** Predicting in this case is based on the reader's knowledge of the typical organization of specific kinds of texts. The texts presented in this exercise are all of an «expository» type, the kind which is usually found in textbooks (the texts in the exercise are actually taken from British secondary school textbooks). An efficient reader has an intuitive knowledge of how sentences and paragraphs are organized in a specific kind of text – students need to become aware that the logical organization of texts often follows some predictable lines. (The issues of monitoring text coherence and recognizing text types and discourse organization will be taken up again, and in more detail, in Unit 5, *Text Processing Strategies* section.)

Note that the students must first discuss and choose the most appropriate alternative (Exercise 6), and must then discuss *why* their choices match (or do not match) the actual development of each paragraph, as shown in the appendix at the end of the Course Book (Exercise 7).

#### SUGGESTED KEY to Exercise 6

- 1c 2a 3c 4c 5a 6b 7b 8c

**8** The students should again first try to predict the continuation of each paragraph and justify their predictions by referring to the texts. Then they should check the actual development of each paragraph and discuss any differences between their predictions and the actual texts.

**9** This exercise can also profitably be done in pairs and checked in small groups. The discussion should focus on the coherence of texts and on the fact that the development of the paragraph should not break the expectations that a reader can reasonably form when considering the first sentence.



# 3 Text Processing Strategies

## Previewing Anticipating

This section is linked with the previous one in Unit 2, but it focuses more closely on previewing the contents of a text by examining its *layout* (its physical, typographical features) (Exercise 1), as well as on the expectations that readers can and should form in their minds *before* and *while* reading a text (Exercises 2 and 3). In both cases, the cognitive processes at work are based on the *interaction* between bottom-up strategies (considering the input from the written word) and top-down strategies (activating the knowledge of the world, or schemata, stored in one's mind).

### 1 KEY

A. This page is taken from Chapter 3, which is entitled *Organisms and their environment*. The section reproduced here is Section No. 5, entitled *Energy relations in ecosystems*. Words in bold type refer to basic terms like *primary producers*, *primary consumers*, *secondary consumers*, *tertiary consumers*, *trophic level*, *food chain*, *food cycle*. A trophic level is defined as *each stage in the flow of energy from one population to another*; a food chain is defined as *the sequence of trophic levels in any ecosystem*; and a food cycle is defined as *all of the food chains in a particular community*. Other important terms are printed in italics: *production*, *consumption*, *death*, *decay*, *energy-flow*.

B. Possible answers:

*Fig. 1:* The life processes within an ecosystem form a chain, each step of which derives its energy from the one before.  
OR The food cycle in an ecosystem.

*Fig. 2:* The number of consumers gets smaller as we move further up the food chain pyramid.

C. Populations in a community can be classified into four groups: primary producers (green plants), which convert sunlight into potential food energy; primary consumers (herbivores); secondary consumers (carnivores); and tertiary consumers (large carnivores). Trophic levels, i.e. the stages in the flow of energy from one population to another, form a food chain. The food chains in a particular community taken together form a food cycle.

Since some potential energy is lost at each trophic level, the amount of energy is greater at trophic levels closest to the primary producers, and populations of herbivorous animals are larger than populations of carnivorous animals.

*Note:* Correct answers to Part C depend on the recognition of cause/result relationships signalled in the text by «linkers» such as *because of* and *as a result*.

2 You may want to pool together all the groups' questions before asking the students to check the summaries of the articles. In this way you will demonstrate even better how predictions vary from one person to another according to one's own knowledge and experience. (Note that this is also a good demonstration of how a cooperative approach in learning can be useful and productive.)

3/4 *Spidergrams* are a good way of recording the results of an (individual or group) brainstorming activity. Provided ample space is left on the page for their development, information can be added on *before*, *while* and *after* reading a text. Diagrams like these can show and integrate the reader's *previous knowledge* with his/her *expectations* and with the *answers* taken from the text as the process of decoding its meanings is carried out. Notice that spidergrams can also be used for productive purposes, e.g. when generating plans before and during writing.

These exercises also highlight the importance of the first and last paragraphs of a text, as well as of the opening sentences in each paragraph. These parts of a text often (although not always!) focus on the main ideas, and are therefore particularly useful for previewing purposes, when taking notes and when writing summaries. The *function* of topic sentences in relation to other sentences in a paragraph is particularly worth noting. (The strategies involved in *making a synthesis* of a text will be dealt with in detail in Units 6-8, *Text Processing Strategies* sections.)

Part D of Exercise 3 invites the students to actively *evaluate* the information provided by the text: at this stage, they should be aware that after reading a text the new information should be related to their own previous knowledge; gaps in either the textual information or their own knowledge can be filled out by subsequent activities (e.g. by consulting reference works or asking a teacher or a friend).

SUGGESTED KEY to Exercise 4 (see the table on the next page)

### 5 KEY

(Par. 1) Apart from ...

(Par. 2) In other words ...

(Par. 3) To give an example, ... also ... Moreover, ...

6 In this activity the students are invited to apply what they have learnt in this section to a writing task. In this way, try to show that insights into the reading process can also be very useful for *production*. Cooperative learning is stressed throughout the activity, from initial brainstorming of contents to structuring, composing, editing and evaluating the text.

<i>Par. No.</i>	<i>Main ideas</i>	<i>Examples/Expansions</i>
1	Communications technology assists development	a) controlling locust damage (Africa) b) managing rangelands (Kenya) c) studying tropical forests (Peru) d) designing road and rail networks e) mineral prospecting f) weather forecasting g) education
2	Communications revolution must make technology available	a) ensuring access to information b) diversifying information sources c) achieving participation
3	Advances in satellite technology can help reduce costs ↓ regional cooperation	a) countries can pay others to launch satellites b) they can rent communications services  a) Colombia, Mexico, Peru: satellites b) UN Centre for Outer Space
4	Communications revolution could break information monopolies	Swedish laws ensure access to data banks
5	Diversity in media	a) cable television b) video cassettes c) home computers d) software programmes
6	Role of communications must change	from one-way (N-S) flow to full dialogue

*Note:* In the above table, features of effective note-taking can be highlighted, e.g. use of nominalization (-ing forms), word deletion (e.g. articles), sentence compression, use of abbreviations and symbols.



## 4 Text Processing Strategies

### Monitoring text cohesion

The *Text Processing Strategies* sections in Unit 4 and 5 are concerned with the features of a text that ensure its *cohesion* (i.e. the semantic relationships it is made of, the relations of meaning between parts of it – Unit 4) and its *coherence* (i.e. the organization of the ideas typical of each particular kind of text – Unit 5).

This section focus mainly on the *grammatical* cohesion devices variously known as «linkers», «connectors», «time and place relaters», etc., i.e. the words that signal the logical relationships within a sentence and between sentences and paragraphs. In this category, which we refer to as «linkers», we have included not only coordinating and subordinating conjunctions (e.g. *because*, *since*) and adverbs (e.g. *therefore*), but also those prepositions and prepositional phrases that are somehow related in signalling the same kind of relationship (e.g. *because of*, *owing to*), since our primary concern in this context has been to show how the same logical relationship (e.g. *cause*) can be expressed with a variety of grammatical means.

Priority has been given to «linkers» because of their importance in text processing for L2 students. However, *grammatical* cohesion devices are not confined to «linkers»: they also include devices such as reference (e.g. personal pronouns, possessive adjectives), comparison, substitution and ellipsis.

Text cohesion is also ensured by *lexical* devices such as repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, antithesis, apposition, collocation and «general words»:

NB The texts in this section are exploited mainly for the presentation, recognition and practice of «linkers»; however, you may want to exploit them for other purposes (e.g. in a topic-based lesson, or for lexical development).

### 1 KEY

*Addition*: also, and, too

*Cause/reason*: since, because

*Result/consequence*: so, therefore

*Comparison*: similarly

*Contrast*: however

*Time*: later, since then

*Example*: like, such as

*Purpose*: so that

*Alternative*: or

### 2 KEY

*Addition*: both ... and, besides

*Cause*: because, for, as

*Result*: consequently

*Contrast*: although

*Example*: for instance, particularly

*Time*: eventually, recently

*Condition*: if

**Language Point** The active use of «linkers» by students presents two main kinds of problems:

- they have to select the appropriate «linker» according to the *semantic relationship* they want to express; and at the same time
- they have to select the appropriate «linker» according to the syntactical constraints imposed by the text, i.e. they have to identify the *grammatical category*, distinguishing between conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions.

This requires careful analysis and practice. The table in this section only provides a summary of some common «linkers». For more detailed information, see the *Language Study* section in Lesson 4E of the *Study Book*.

When you check the following exercises with the class, you can discuss the students' criteria for choosing the various «linkers»; in several cases alternatives are possible. It is worth pointing out that *punctuation* is often a valuable clue in clarifying the syntactical constraints, and therefore in choosing the appropriate «linker» (cf. for example the «linkers» expressing *contrast*: *but* (conjunction) can optionally be preceded by a comma; *however* (adverb) is usually preceded by a full stop or a semi-colon).

### 3 KEY

- as a result 2a) not only 2b) but also 3. although 4. since 5. as well 6. so 7. while

### 4 SUGGESTED KEY

- but 2. because 3. for instance/for example 4. but 5. therefore/consequently 6. so that 7. if 8. however 9. although 10. as a result/consequently/therefore

### 5 SUGGESTED KEY

- for example/for instance 2. although 3. however 4. besides/moreover 5. if 6. as a result/consequently/therefore 7. also 8. because

**6** This exercise allows the students to manipulate the meanings within and between sentences on the basis of the «linkers» used in each particular case. Comparison and discussion in small groups can help to highlight the criteria used to ensure cohesion in each text.



# 5 Text Processing Strategies

## Monitoring text coherence

### Recognizing text types and discourse organization

This section deals with the problem of identifying the ways in which writers can ensure the *coherence* of their texts, i.e. the logical organization of the ideas in relation to the *purpose* of a text, and therefore in connection with its particular *rhetorical organization*. Although each type of text (and, within a type, each genre) has its own particular organization, we have chosen to highlight five basic text types (i.e. texts providing a *description*, a *narration*, *arguments* for or against a topic, the *explanation/clarification* of facts, and *rules* or *advice* to the reader). Within each of these types, we have tried to show that the ideas can be organized with reference to some easily identifiable categories which answer a particular purpose: for example, *general statements* are usually used to *introduce*, *reinforce* or *summarize* a topic; *examples* are provided to support *statements* or *arguments*; *arguments* are given to support a *thesis*; etc.

We believe students can benefit from an awareness of these ways of organizing the ideas within a text, but we think that they should be led, through guided activities, to *discover* these issues by themselves. This is why this section provides ample opportunities for students to manipulate texts in order to become aware of how each of them has been built by the writer; in addition, some basic information is systematically given, so that students can relate their findings to a more structured view of this complex problem.

**1** This task can be turned into a game: see which group/pair of students is the quickest to rearrange a text correctly (i.e. in the original order chosen by the writer). This will provide a «softer» introduction to the topic of this section, and more formal considerations will be elicited after the task has been completed. As an alternative, you can introduce the problem of text coherence by explaining to the students that one of the problems in reading and understanding more difficult texts (including the curricular material in textbooks, reference books, etc.) is being able to follow the author's plan, i.e. the way in which he/she has organized his/her ideas. A strategy which would allow a reader «not to lose the thread» would be very helpful; an awareness of the typical ways in which authors develop their ideas in particular types of texts could allow the reader to make predictions and anticipate the logical development of the text. See if the students can contribute their own ideas, problems and experiences, or if they can mention strategies which they already use to cope with more difficult texts (in other subjects too).

The task of rearranging a text, and, above all, of discussing the criteria for rearrangement, can be a time-consuming one. You will probably want to focus on one or two texts at a time, or may decide to focus only on the texts that you think will provide your students with the most useful insights into the problem. You can also set part(s) of the exercise as homework, using class time for comparison and discussion.

KEY The original sequence of each text follows.

Text 1: b f d a c e

Text 2: c b f e a d

Text 3: d c f a e b

Text 4: d f b e c a

Text 5: c f a d b e

**2** This is probably the most important part of the whole activity, since the students will have to justify their choices, and, in so doing, will discover some of the most useful features of *discourse organization* that ensure text coherence. Note that technical terminology is not really essential to talk about these issues – the students can express their findings using their own words (in Italian if necessary). However, you may want to introduce some terms which can facilitate the development of the discussion (notice that the basic terminology needed to talk about the problems in this section appears in the instructions for exercises 3, 4 and 5).

*Coherence* and *cohesion* are closely connected: this is why this exercise invites the students to focus both on the organization of ideas (a: coherence) and on the linguistic means used to signal semantic relationships (b: cohesion).

**3** The five texts are meant to be representative of five main types: descriptive (Text 1), narrative (Text 5), argumentative (Text 3), expository (Text 2), and regulatory (Text 4). These can be regarded as the *main, global* functions/purposes of the texts. *Local* purposes/functions *within* each text can of course be realized through passages of a different type, e.g. descriptions, narrations, etc. The discussion on this task should elicit ways in which the various text types differ from each other, as well as the importance and usefulness of recognizing these differences from a reader's point of view.

(As for text *genres*, note that Text 1 comes from a book of essays, Text 2 from a British secondary school geography textbook, Text 4 from the Highway Code; Text 3 is a newspaper article, and Text 5 is a magazine article originally published in the «New Statesman».)

**4** To make the task easier for the students, the instructions for this exercise provide a list of the general *categories of information* which can be identified in the five texts. It is not really essential that the students should provide a very detailed analysis of each text; besides, there may be more than one way of describing the organization of each text (and the comparison of these different ways could yield interesting insights). However, it is important for the students to realize that the organization of a text *can* be described and that this kind of awareness *can* help a reader in the process of understanding.

**5** KEY One possible interpretation is:  
C (context and background events);  
F (background events);  
A/D (central event);  
B (consequences);  
E (consequences/conclusion)

**6** SUGGESTED KEY  
A. *to list*: first of all ... then ... also ... next ... what else?; *to compare*: interminable (list of puddings); long (list of cakes); innumerable (kinds of biscuits); better and crisper (biscuits); far and away the best way (of cooking potatoes);

delicious (potato cakes); far better (to cook new potatoes ... than ...); never (seen a haggis ...) ... nor (sausages of) quite the same kind as (ours)

B. a) English cooking is the worst in the world/the best of English cooking is simply French cooking b) the list of puddings c) ways of cooking potatoes; the author's and his readers' d) roasting potatoes under the joint e) the British Isles f) the things the author has named in the preceding paragraphs

**7** KEY A. Imperatives (affirmative and negative); *must*  
B. Conditional sentences (Type 1)

**8** KEY a) men and women b) that happy knack c) «anybody» (impersonal subject); men and women who are fond of gardening d) flower show e) happy solitaires

**9** The knowledge and awareness of text organization that the students should have gained by doing the «receptive» tasks in this section can now be applied to «productive» tasks. However, as in similar previous occasions, rules of coherence should not be perceived by the students as a straightjacket which limits their imagination, but rather as flexible guidelines. There are many different ways of organizing a text, but there are also as many ways of «breaking the rules»: of course, the ultimate communicative effect of a text will depend on whether it has reached the goal it was meant to reach for the intended audience.

Groupwork could profitably be used for this task: for example, the students could brainstorm their ideas in small groups, discuss text organization in pairs, do the actual writing individually, and finally get together again to exchange and comment on their work.



## 6 Text Processing Strategies

### Making a synthesis (1): Identifying text sequences Recognizing types and levels of information

The *Text Processing Strategies* sections in Units 6, 7 and 8 deal with the strategies needed to *make a synthesis* of a text, with particular reference to *expository* and *argumentative* texts (which are also the main kinds of texts that students meet for study purposes). These strategies have a high cross-curricular value, and it is therefore worth trying, whenever possible, to prompt the students to transfer them across the range of school subjects.

The approach to synthesizing a text that is adopted in these sections involves

- a) *identifying text sequences*, i.e. discussing how we can distinguish between *physical* (typographical) paragraphs and *logical* paragraphs, which do not often coincide. A *sequence* can be identified as a portion of the text that focusses on a topic (or aspect of a topic). *Key-words* can often be used to identify topics and, in turn, sequences. This stage is practised in this Unit;
- b) *recognizing, within each sequence, different types and levels of information*. This can be done by taking into consideration the *logical relationships* that the sequence exhibits between items of information: this means differentiating, e.g. between a *general statement* and an *example*; a *fact* and an *opinion*; a *process* from its *stages*; a *structure* from its *parts*; a *proposition/thesis* from its *arguments*; a *general category* from its *elements*. There are many different kinds of relationships between items of information, but it is useful to draw the students' attention to the ones that most frequently appear in expository and argumentative texts. This stage is practised in this Unit and in Unit 7;
- c) *clarifying the criteria for selection*, i.e. discussing what to highlight as part of the synthesis and what to leave out. This is not done through a mere and generic distinction between «essential» and «secondary» information, but by reference to the *communicative features* of the proposed synthesis: e.g., what is its purpose?; how detailed should it be?; what are we most interested in (facts and/or opinions? statements and/or examples? a whole process and/or its different stages? etc.); what do we (or the reader of our synthesis) already know and can therefore leave out? This stage is practised in Unit 8;
- d) *selecting the desired information*, either by *deleting* unwanted information or by *unifying* information into higher units of meaning. The former strategy can make use, for example, of *topic sentences* (which can be considered as ready-made syntheses). The latter strategy involves *omitting words*, *condensing phrases and sentences*, *using symbols and abbreviations*, and *rephrasing the information*, i.e. re-expressing it using one's own words if possible. This stage is practised in Unit 8.

Of course these steps in making a synthesis of a text involve both *cognitive* operations (e.g. classification) and *linguistic* operations, i.e. a close analysis of the text to exploit the devices that ensure text coherence (cf. Unit 5) and text cohesion (cf. Unit 4): for example, «linkers», which signal both the development of ideas and semantic relationships, play an important role in helping the reader work through the stages described above.

Throughout the process, the students will be asked to consider *techniques for note-taking*, from using symbols to writing outlines, from filling in and designing grids and tables to transcribing information from verbal to diagrammatic display, by completing or constructing charts, diagrams and graphs. Effective use of such techniques will ensure that the selected information will be rearranged in ways which will make it more memorable and therefore easier to study and remember.

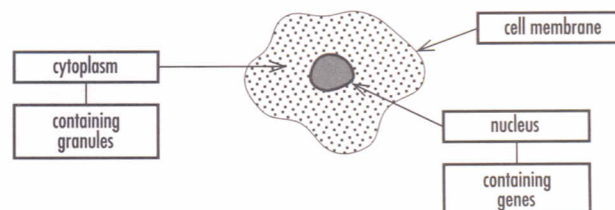
Owing to the important role of *discussion* in practising the strategies in these sections, the relevant tasks are best done in pairs or small groups, with brief class reports at the end. Time constraints may make it necessary to set some of the tasks for homework: in this case, class time can be used for comparison and discussion of the work produced by the students, and for clarification and confirmation of the *strategies* that have emerged during the process.

A brief questionnaire or class discussion can serve to introduce the topic: when, where and how do the students take notes? How useful are they for revision or study purposes? Which strategies have seemed most useful to them under different circumstances? What are the problems they still have to face in producing and using their notes? In this way try to elicit the students' already acquired skills, as well as their beliefs and attitudes about note-taking and making syntheses.

**1** Titles can be considered as the extreme form of synthesis. Finding a suitable title for a text is therefore a productive exercise because it can help to identify the central idea or main topic of the text itself.

#### SUGGESTED KEY

- A. The structure of the cell
- B. Par. 1: The cell membrane ... to get out.  
Par. 2: The cytoplasm ... stored food.  
Par. 3: The nucleus ...
- C/D. cell membrane (allows oxygen and food substances to get in and waste to get out); cytoplasm (allows chemical reactions which release energy); nucleus (control centre) – cytoplasm + nucleus = protoplasm

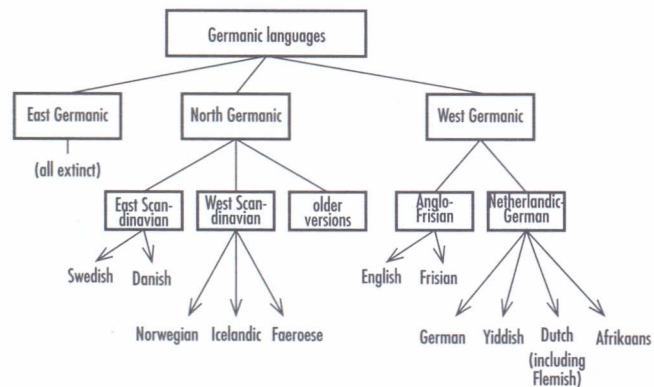




## 2 SUGGESTED KEY

- A. 1: Germanic languages ... into three groups.  
 2: East Germanic ... in the 16th century.  
 3: North Germanic ... sagas.  
 4: West Germanic ... (Netherlandic-German).  
 5: Dialect ... labels.

B/C/D.



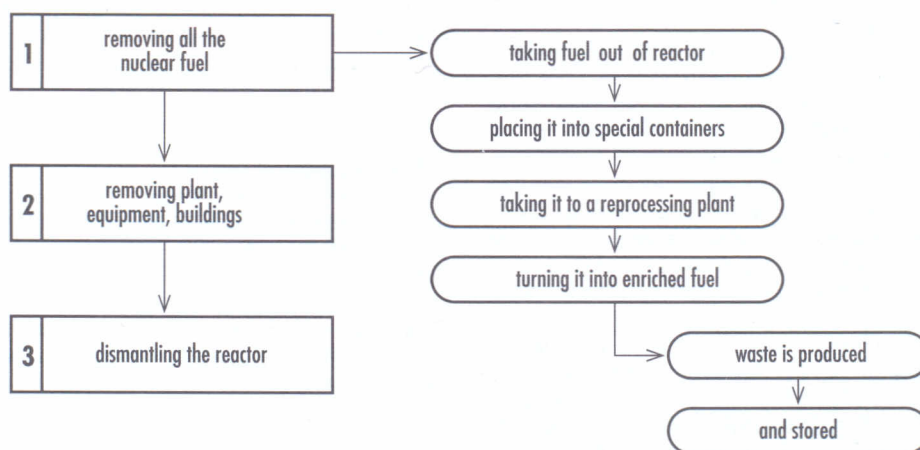
3 When you check Part E, you can point out *nominalization* (the use of *verbal nouns/-ing* forms), *word omission* (e.g. articles) and *sentence compression* as linguistic devices to reduce the size of the original text.

## SUGGESTED KEY

- A. Demolishing a nuclear power station  
 B. 1 (par. 1); 2 (par. 2/3); 3 (par. 4); 4 (par. 5/6); 5 (par. 7)  
 C/D/E. (See table and diagram at the bottom of the page)

## SUGGESTED KEY to Exercise 3 (C/D/E)

Basic stages	Time needed	Reasons
1.	up to 5 years	large number of radioactive fuel rods to be removed separately
2.	5 to 7 years	some radioactivity involved
3.	100 years or more	radioactivity must decay before human maintenance teams can look after the robots demolishing the reactor





## 7 Text Processing Strategies

### Making a synthesis (2): Recognizing types and levels of information

This section provides further practice in the central stage in the process of making a synthesis, i.e. recognizing types and levels of information. The types of information considered here cover the distinction between *causes* and *consequences* (Exercise 1) and between a *thesis* and its *arguments* (Exercise 2). While the main focus of the activities is the recognition of different types and levels of information, the tasks also provide practice in identifying «linkers» and «discourse indicators», which signal different kinds of relationships within a text, and in summarizing a text by completing outline notes.

For a general introduction to the problem of making a synthesis, see the *Text Processing Strategies* section in Unit 6.

**1** If you are not doing this exercise immediately after the ones in the corresponding section of Unit 6, remind the students of the basic stages in making a synthesis of a text. It is important that the students should keep the whole process in mind while considering the importance and the relevance of its different stages.

#### SUGGESTED KEY

##### A.

- Par. 1 (Although much has been written ... and thus made war possible): Introduction  
 Par. 2: (In the first place ... and free public land in the West): First group of causes  
 Par. 3: (In addition to such differences ... in the new western territories): Second group of causes  
 Par. 4: (And finally, ... no longer held the country together): Third group of causes  
 Par. 5: (When the Republican candidate ... Jefferson Davies of Mississippi was elected President): Events leading to the war  
 Par. 6: (The war ... modern industrial America): Consequences

##### B.

1. Economic and social differences (*In the first place ...*);
2. The issue of slavery (*In addition to such differences ...*);
3. Political differences (*And finally, ...*)

##### C.

1. Most of the country's merchants, manufacturers, and bankers were based in the North, while the South continued to be mainly agricultural.
2. Slavery had almost disappeared in the North by 1800, but was becoming a permanent institution in the South.
3. The two major parties, Whig and Democrat, split on the issue of slavery.

##### D.

- a) ruin and impoverishment of many Southern states
- b) long-lasting feelings of racial animosity

- c) establishment of a strongly centralized federal government
- d) abolition of slavery
- e) development of modern industrial America

##### E.

The causes of the American Civil War can be traced back to three main series of factors. First, geography, climate and historical circumstance caused economic and social differences: while industrial and trading activities were based in the North, the South continued to be mainly agricultural. Second, slavery was becoming a permanent institution in the South, whereas in the North it had almost disappeared. Third, political parties split on the issue of slavery: while in the North the new antislavery Republican party was joined by many antislavery Democrats, in the South the Whigs joined Southern Democrats in defense of slavery.

### 2 SUGGESTED KEY

##### A.

- Asimov's *thesis* is that travelling back in time is extremely improbable.
- He provides *four main arguments* in support of his thesis.
- *To start with, ...; Secondly, ...; Furthermore, ...; Finally, ...*

##### B.

THESIS: Par. 1

ARGUMENTS:

1. (Par. 2-3); 2. (Par. 4-5); 3. (Par. 6); 4. (Par. 7)

CONCLUSION: Par. 8

##### C.

*First argument:* If we imagine that the time machine would move with Earth, we would have to go faster than the speed of light.

*Second argument:* If we managed to match all those movements, traveling through time would require as much energy as traveling through space, and as much time too.

*Fourth argument:* Even if the principle of causality could be violated, and if some future technological advance could make time travel practical, it still remains that nobody from the future has come to visit us.

##### D.

Traveling into the past would destroy the principle of causality.

##### E.

THESIS: Time travel is extremely improbable.

ARGUMENTS:

1. a) we would find ourselves in outer space  
b) we would have to go faster than the speed of light
2. it would require as much energy as traveling through space, and as much time too
3. it would destroy the principle of causality
4. nobody from the future has come to visit us

CONCLUSION: nobody in the future will ever solve the problem



# 8 Text Processing Strategies

## Making a synthesis (3): Deciding criteria for selection Deleting and unifying information

This section provides reflection on and practice in the final stages in the process of making a synthesis, i.e. making the criteria for selection explicit, and producing a new, synthetic version of the text by deleting and/or unifying information. The section, like the previous ones in Units 6 and 7, also includes practice in using diagrams and charts as a useful way of highlighting information.

The section focuses on *American education*: after a general overview of the educational system in the first text (Exercises 1-4), an article provides thought-provoking arguments for the improvement of the system (Exercises 5-10). The section ends with a writing task which invites the students to produce a similar article on Italian education (Exercise 11).

For a detailed description of the process of making a synthesis, see the *Text Processing Strategies* section in Unit 6.

### 1 SUGGESTED KEY

The first two paragraphs provide a general introduction, and could be considered as a single sequence (although one could argue that paragraph 2 is more concerned with more detailed aspects like size of school districts and financing). Paragraphs 3-5 can be said to constitute a single sequence, since they deal with economic, social and geographical differences. The same can be said for paragraphs 6-8, which outline the structure of the educational system. Paragraph 9 is about educational achievement, and Paragraph 10 tries to relate this to the peculiar aims of American education.

**2** This exercise highlights the different kinds of *criteria* that can be used for selecting information: the reader's interest in particular topics (*Part A*), her/his choice of general statements rather than concrete examples (*Part B*), her/his purposes in highlighting different kinds of information (*Part C*). When discussing with the students the reasons for their choices, try to make the general point that the criteria for selecting information must always relate to the reader's *purposes* in making a synthesis.

KEY A selection of *possible* answers:

*Part A*

a (par. 10); b (par. 6-8); c (par. 2); d (par. 9); e (par. 3-5)

*Part B*

a) In general, the more money ... on his school; Within the major cities ... in educational expenditures; There are also contrasts ... school districts.

b) the affluent white ... and the inner city ... There may be language problems ... Many rural districts ...

*Part C*

a) There is a growing feeling ... as possible.

b) While a century ago ... can now read and write. American students ... nations studied.

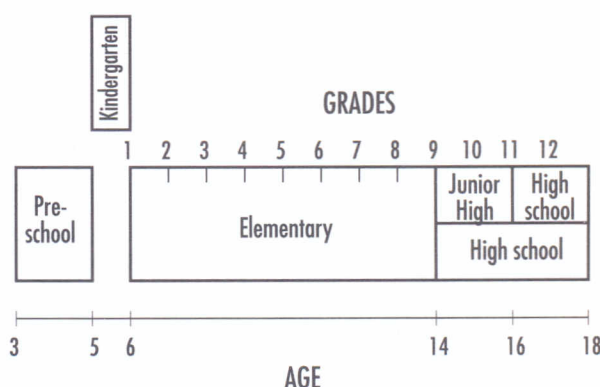
c) Education in the usual sense ... on its children.

**3** Note that many of the sentences which the students should have underlined to highlight general ideas in the previous exercise can be considered topic sentences.

The emphasis in Part B of the exercise is on getting the students to think about the *criteria* they have to use to *make choices* for every step in the process of writing a summary. The main point is that a summary is not the objective result of a neutral process, but a conscious re-elaboration of the original text according to personal criteria.

To help the students link together the various parts of their summary, you could remind them of the «indicators» that were practised in the *Communication Strategies* section in Unit 7.

### 4 KEY



The following is a possible writing task to round up the first part of this section (but also consider the writing task suggested in Exercise 11).

*Write a leaflet for an English school on one or more aspects of the Italian educational system.*

- Decide which topic(s) you want to deal with (e.g. national/local organization; kinds and levels of schools; syllabuses, present-day problems ...).
- Devote a paragraph to each topic (or *aspect* of a topic), using *visual devices* where you think this will improve your presentation.
- If you want to include your *comments* or *opinions*, decide whether to place them *within* each paragraph or *all together* in a final paragraph.

**5** Note the use of explicit «indicators» like *in the first place ... secondly ... in the third place ... another suggestion ... my next proposal ... finally ...*

SUGGESTED KEY

Par. 1/2; Par. 3/4; Par. 5-7; Par. 8; Par. 9; Par. 10/11; Par. 12/13; Par. 14/15

**6** KEY See Exercise 8 below.

**7** Underlining is a very effective way of highlighting information, provided it is used sparingly. In this exercise, the students are asked to underline (as a way of recognizing) *specific kinds* of information; this also means highlighting a *hierarchy* of levels of information. The sentences they underline in Parts B and C will be the basis for completing the chart in Exercise 8.



KEY See Exercise 8 below.

**8** Condensing phrases and sentences, and, more generally, paraphrasing a text in one's own words are difficult tasks, and ones that can probably be achieved in the long run through repeated practice. However, it is useful to present the students with examples and, above all, to compare and discuss *their own* attempts at paraphrasing. In addition, the role of symbols, abbreviations and visual devices in making syntheses should not be underestimated.

SUGGESTED KEY (See the chart at the bottom of the page)

**9** Some statements that could be considered as actual facts rather than personal opinions can be found in Par. 3 (the description of the use of loudspeakers in schools), par. 5

(the description of the security measures adopted in schools), par. 8 (the example of Japanese children), par. 9 (the examples of Eton and Oxford, the fate of older public schools in America), par. 12 (students are regularly bused from one section of a city to another).

**10** The students can be invited to take notes of the main points raised in the discussion. This will help them with the following writing task.

**11** The organization of the article which is suggested in the instructions for this exercise reflects the organization of the article that the students have just read. However, you may prefer to suggest a different organization, or leave the students free to think about, discuss and choose other ways of structuring the article.

SUGGESTED KEY to Exercise 8

<i>Proposal No.</i>	<i>Suggestion</i>	<i>Arguments</i>
2.	disarm the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the school should feel less like a prison</li> <li>– the school is primarily a teaching agent</li> </ul>
3.	enlist the children in keeping the school clean	it can suggest to them that this is <i>their</i> school
4.	save old schools and build fewer new ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– many reforms requiring new buildings are no longer so desirable</li> <li>– each school should have a history, a character</li> </ul>
5.	look on new hardware with a skeptical eye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the passion for new hardware makes one forget the real tasks of teaching</li> <li>– money will be saved</li> <li>– teachers will concentrate more on the main tasks of reading, writing and calculating</li> </ul>