

Reading

Motivation for reading

In their every day work, many trade unionists may need to understand texts of varying difficulty in the target language: notices of meetings, letters, reports and, in some cases, European Directives. The trade union language learner will therefore read with interest because s/he can make use of the information. Moreover s/he will read with a certain aim and expectation. The language tutor should capitalise on such motivation for reading in the target language, using authentic material which relates to the work of trade unionists and which will ultimately be useful to them in their union roles.

Reasons for reading

There are different reasons for reading in the "real world". Reading often does not involve reading every word in a text. The reader's eye skims over the text, undaunted by unknown words, in order to gain and understanding of the overall meaning of the text. At other times, reading involves looking for specific information in a text, for example, a date, times, places or named individuals, and the reader's eye scans specifically for that information, discarding less important parts of the text.



The experienced language tutor will ensure that the learner develops appropriate reading strategies

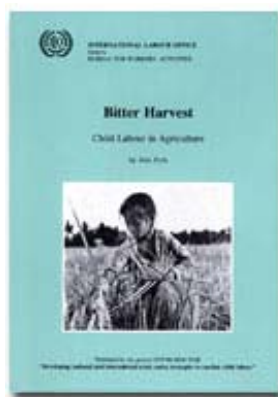
Alternatively the trade union learner may be reading in the target language to obtain detailed information on a particular topic. In this case the learner will be engaged in close examination of the text and will have to be skilled in strategies for coping with unknown vocabulary as well as in dictionary skills. The experienced language tutor will be aware of these different reasons for reading and will ensure that the learner develops appropriate reading strategies.



Use of authentic reading materials

There is a wide variety of authentic material available for trade union learners which can be used for a range of language levels. It is often possible to use an authentic text such as a leaflet advertising a union, and design reading tasks related to the text for beginners as well as for advanced learners. The former could be asked to scan the text for specific information, while the latter could be directed to a deeper understanding of the text and be asked to offer alternative ideas for promoting that particular union.

The authentic material available to the language tutor will include union notices, newsletters, training information, letters, reports and union magazine, newspaper and web articles and it is not a difficult task for the language tutor to create a file of up-to-date, authentic reading texts.



There is a wide variety of authentic material available for trade union learners

Reading activities

An often overlooked reading skill which the tutor should develop in the learner involves predicting what information the text will contain. In a pre-text exercise the learners can be asked to share their knowledge of the topic addressed in the text. They can also be encouraged to guess what information the text will contain. In this way the learner will approach the text already "tuned into" the subject.

The learner can then read the text quickly to gain an understanding of the main ideas. The tutor may then direct the learners to close examination of the text to improve vocabulary skills or to study particular structures in context. Finally the learners can be directed to a writing task or discussion so that some of the vocabulary and structures can be consolidated.



Example activities

READING

Level 1



Food and drink in the UK

In the 21st century people eat a healthier diet than in the past. The traditional English breakfast of fried bacon and eggs is not so common in homes today. Thirty years ago people bought much more sugar than now. Today most people prefer white meat (for example, chicken) to red meat (for example, beef). Nowadays the government is encouraging people to eat a « healthy diet »; that is, a diet with at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day. The Government is also advising people to restrict their 'fat intake' and to take more exercise on a daily basis.

Convenience food is now extremely popular and 'ready-to-cook meals' are easily available in the supermarkets. Over 60% of households have a microwave oven to cook such food and nearly 90% have a freezer. Many people also like eating in restaurants: both traditional restaurants and fast food restaurants. Popular fast-food restaurants are those which sell beef burgers or pizzas. Due to the spread of these other types of fast-food outlets the traditional English meal of fish and chips is not quite as popular as it used to be, but most towns, even small ones, usually still have at least one fish and chip shop, if not more.

Restaurants which serve foreign food are also very common, especially those serving Chinese, Indian or Italian food. If you want to eat English food, go to a pub. Many pubs serve meals, especially at lunchtime. These meals are often good value.

Now try to answer the following questions:

1. List some changes in British eating habits over the last 20 years.
2. What modern equipment do households have today?
3. What sort of food do fast-food restaurants sell?
4. Which types of foreign restaurants are common in the UK?



5. Why might you choose to eat in a pub?

Now work with a partner. Ask and answer these questions about your own country:

1. What types of fast food outlets are there in your country?
2. Which types of foreign restaurants are there in your country?
3. What sort of food, if any, is served in bars in your country?
4. Are there many restaurants in your country serving your typical national dishes?
5. Do you prefer eating at home or in a restaurant?

Level 2

Read the text and then answer the questions which follow. Remember it is not necessary to understand every single word of a text in order to obtain a general idea.

Pay cut and job losses at Tyne Textiles

Last week the human resources director of Tyne Textiles announced that hundreds of workers will have to take a pay-cut to save their jobs at the company. The plan which includes an average 11.5% pay cut, affects more than 600 workers at three sites in the region.

Tyne Textiles is also looking for a number of voluntary redundancies. The HR director told union representatives that two sites will close unless staff take a pay cut. He explained that increased competition in the textile industry has led to the present difficulties. The company hopes that restructuring will safeguard its long-term future.

Some staff will see their salary frozen until pay awards in other centres catch up with their levels. The pay of other workers will be cut but they will receive some compensation to help ease the transition. Yesterday the unions expressed their total objection to the proposals. They organised mass meetings to explain the deal and there will be ballots on the deal during the next two weeks. Shop stewards discussed possible industrial action but the problem affects individuals in different ways.



Language training for European trade unionists – a guide

Make a short summary of the text and include the following information:

- The industry
- The number of jobs
- The reasons of management
- The view of the unions



“He explained that increased competition in the textile industry has led to the present difficulties”

Match the words from the text in the first column with the meanings given in the second column

1.Voluntary redundancy	a) change in the organisation usually with job losses.
2.Natural wastage	b) reduction in wages
3.Pay cut	c) reduction in jobs through workers moving to a another company, retirement, death etc.
4.Restructuring	d) agreeing to leave a job.



Level 3

Training at Work

Discussion points

- ❑ What is the benefit for employers in encouraging their employees to participate in training?
- ❑ What role do Trade Unions have in ensuring that their members receive training at work?

1 A TRAINING AGREEMENT

You are going to read a report on a training agreement between the union IG Metall and Teldec-Press in Germany in 1993.

Two areas covered by the agreement are:

- management to check need for training.
- information on training opportunities should be made available to employees.

Can you predict at least three other areas covered by the agreement?

2 *Read the report and see if your predictions are correct:*

Further training

The Agreement on Qualifications (Qualifizierungstarifvertrag) guarantees the right of all employees to further training. The specified aims of such training are:

- ❑ **to promote security of employment;**
- ❑ **to enable the workforce to adapt comprehensively and in good time to changes in production processes and work organisation;**
- ❑ **to impart and/or improve social, ecological and economic competence; and**
- ❑ **to safeguard or improve levels of technical proficiency.**

The agreement specifies that employees' attendance on further training courses should not be at the expense of annual holiday entitlement, nor may it be linked to any form of obligation as regards the duration of employment with the company.



Participation in further training courses is to proceed on a voluntary basis, and those employees choosing to enrol for such courses must be released from their duties and continue to receive normal pay. The employer is obliged, furthermore, to cover the full costs of further training and to provide the workforce with comprehensive information on the opportunities available for such training.

At least once a year management must undertake an assessment of training requirements in all areas of the plant. This assessment is to be subject to consultations between management and the works council, who are to negotiate an annual further training programme. The agreement specifies that the works council shall have a right of co-determination with regard to the planning, conception and execution of further training measures.

Source: European Industrial Relations Review (No. 232, May 1993)

3 *Read the report again and find the words that mean:*

- help *or* encourage it to develop
- protect
- reduce
- length
- evaluation



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