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PEDAGOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY**

**Ph.D. School of Education**

**FOREIGN LANGUAGE READING COMPREHENSION AND  
USAGE OF READING STRATEGIES**

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## **1 Introduction**

The society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was characterized in different ways. One of the most popular definitions is the knowledge based on information society and nowadays the learning based society. The relevant knowledge, the foreign language knowledge and the fast information acquisition and procession became an economic value.

Reading literacy and foreign language knowledge is necessary for learning and exchanging information.

The subject of the thesis is the examination of the foreign language comprehension, the foreign language competence and the influence of the reading strategies used for the L2 reading comprehension. The main goal of our measurement, made by standard test, is to determine the level of German language knowledge and German language reading competence of the 15-years-old students in Hungarian-German language teaching minority high schools.

The examination of L1 reading competence in our high schools is not new. The present measurement is special because it examines the foreign language and reading competence of the 15-years-old students of German nationality high schools that are necessary to be able to succeed in the labour market. These two competences are in close relation and the research shows their influence on each other. With the help of our study we tried to discover an intact field. Up to now that influences the possibilities of students before entering higher education.

The choice of German nationality students as a target group is partly personal since the author of this work is also from the German speaking minority, studied at a German nationality secondary grammar school and now he teaches students at the German Nationality Department of a college. In case of the latter the adequate language competence and reading comprehension skills are extremely important and the candidates can be prepared for classroom work bearing in mind the results of the survey.

## 2 About the Hungarian German minority

Regarding the geographical location and the history of our country, Hungary is multinational so bi- and multilingualism is a natural phenomenon. The language diversity, the outer political and economic effects have had great influence for centuries on the curriculum chosen for language teaching.

The forms of the bilingual teaching in schools (26/1997. (VII.10.) MKM decree) and minority school teaching (32/1997. (XI.5.) MKM decree) are legally regulated. Three forms of minority school teaching can be separated:

1. native language teaching
2. bilingual minority teaching
3. minority language teaching (traditional and extended forms).

In the last 15 years the number of nationality teaching institutions and the number of participants taking part have increased. The most important of these is the German language thanks to its status as regional and world language (*Vámos Ágnes*, 2004).

The expansion of foreign language teaching and the free choice of languages significantly influenced the nationality language teaching and also the status of nationality languages. According to parental expectations world language knowledge is more important than nationality language knowledge (*Imre Anna*, 2004).

German as a nationality, regional and world language can not be separated. Since the demand has increased more and more families of not German nationality get their children applied to German nationality schools. This fact ensures the German as nationality language to remain in its status contrary to other nationality languages losing territories.

The definition of native language, foreign language and nationality (minority) language is important concerning our survey. Despite the national, minority and ethnic teaching decree (32/1997. (XI. 5.)) which defines minority language the native tongue we consider Hungarian as mother tongue high German as foreign language (Drescher shares the same opinion (1995, p.55. and 60.)) we consider the archaic language of Hungarian German ethnic minority that people, who still know the dialect, use at home or in smaller communities.

It could be expected from the language minority to know and use the dialect but nowadays it is not the particular case. For the oldest generation the nationality language served as mother tongue, for the youngest Hungarian language has taken over this role (*Knipf-*

*Komlósi*, 2003. p.447-448). According to the statement of Ágnes Vámos (2000a. p.62) the nationality language of minorities counts as mother language but not particularly native language for the students can be supported by our results.

The question arises whether those students belonging to minorities could relearn their mother tongue. In the comprehension of relearning the minority language it is important to differentiate between the High German taught in schools, and the minority languages that teachers are not taught; the conclusion is that it can not be relearned. In this sense the German nationality student learns a similar language to the language of his ethnic group; he tries to identify and the original dialect of his minority slowly fades away (*Szarka László*, 2003.).

The institutions in our survey conduct German nationality teaching, and none of these institutions require belonging to Hungarian German minority or nationality language knowledge. This way the German nationality language and German as a foreign language can not be separated (*Vámos Ágnes*, 2004. p.27) so nationality bilingual schools conduct foreign language teaching.

### **3 Theoretical background: bilingualism and reading in L1 and L2**

The aim of this part is the exploration of the field of bilingualism, focusing on its cognitive theories that are important in terms of learning and reading comprehension strategies.

#### **3.1 Bilingualism: definition**

The reason of different definitions and categorizations of bilingualism can be explained by the multidisciplinary nature of the concept that is why the different disciplines (linguistics, pedagogy, psychology, sociology) try to define and approach with the help of their theoretical background (see *Baker and Prys Jones*, 1998.) A wide range of definitions were born where one can find numerous other concepts between the native-like control (*Bloomfield*, 1935.) and the minimal definition (*Haugen*, 1953.; *Diebold*, 1964.). *Bloomfield* (1935) considers people bilingual only in case of speaking the language native-like. This concept is called the maximal concept of bilingualism. *Diebold* gives the minimal definition of bilingualism, which allows people with minimal competence in a second language without being able to write, read and speak to be squeezed into the bilingual category (*Romaine*, 1995.). This case is called passive or receptive bilingualism by linguists.

Among the different categorization of bilingualism neither is able to describe all kinds of bilingual situation and there are a lot of overlaps.

### **3.2 Changes in attitudes towards bilingualism and the cognitive theories of bilingualism**

The scientific and sociological judgement of bilingualism can be categorized in three phases in *Bialystok's* (1991) opinion. In the first phase from the early nineteenth century up to about the 1960s when bilingual children were compared to only native language speaking children, there was a widespread belief that bilingualism has a detrimental effect on a human being's intellectual and spiritual growth.

The reanalyses of the early versions of IQ tests do not confirm that monolinguals were superior to bilinguals. On the contrary bilingualism has lots of advantages. Since the 1960s due to new researches and changes in political ideology the attitude towards bilingualism has changed. *Baker and Prys Jones* (1998) calls attention to the several communicative, cultural and cognitive advantages of bilingualism such as major language sensitivity, major and earlier language awareness, more fluency, flexibility and elaboration in thinking than a monolingual and more chance in work.

*Bialystok* (1991) says that the current political and theoretical ethos permits a sober and balanced examination of the influence of bilingualism on children's development. [...] Politically it seems less necessary to prove the acceptability of bilingualism for children. We are free, that is, to discover that being bilingual may in fact bring no special cognitive or linguistic benefit to children, and that finding will not threaten the existence of children in our educational system who happen to be bilingual.

The scientific and sociological judgement of bilingualism influenced the formation of cognitive theories, the explanations of the relation between cognition and bilingualism. The results of the early researches that continuously underlined the negative influence of bilingualism and the disadvantages of being bilinguals with respect to monolinguals, confirmed such an erroneous theory in scientists and every day people when somebody learns a language more and more his knowledge of the other language diminishes. The capacity of the brain to learn languages was considered to be limited and they thought that learning a second language takes up other free capacities of the brain to learn other disciplines. In this way the improvement of the language knowledge can be realized only at the expense of the other language. This concept was represented by ballons.

Researches on the field of human memory had shown that the capacity of the brain is unlimited and the concept of having only a limited space in the brain for language learning is erroneous (*Eysenck and Keane, 1993.*)

*Cummins* tried to explain why bilingualism has sometimes positive and sometimes negative effect on the development of the skills helping cognitive-learning. The Thresholds theory says in case of language skills there are different degrees and there is a level of language proficiency that a bilingual must obtain in order, firstly, to avoid negative effects of bilingualism, and secondly, to obtain the positive advantages of bilingualism. *Cummins* divides the bilingual competence into three levels that are separated by two thresholds. Reaching the first threshold helps the elimination of negative effects and reaching the second threshold guarantees the positive effects on cognitive growth. Under the first threshold there are those whose current competence in both their languages is insufficiently or inadequately developed. Consequently there can be negative cognitive effects. Between the two thresholds there are those with age – appropriate competence in one of their languages but not in both. At this level it is unlikely to have any significant positive or negative effects. When a child has age-appropriate ability in both their languages, they may have cognitive advantages over monolinguals.

In his Interdependence Hypothesis *Cummins* outlines that child's second language competence is partly dependent on the level of competence already achieved in the first language (*Cummins, 1979b. p.232.*)

The above Hypothesis leads to the idea of Common Underlying Proficiency. This can be pictorially represented in the form of two icebergs. Two icebergs are separate above the surface. That is, two languages are visibly different in outward conversation. Underneath the surface, the two icebergs are fused this way the two languages do not function separately. Both languages operate through the same central processing system. This system guarantees a passage between languages, the transfer of cognitive operations if enough language competence is available.

*Cummins* divided the language skills into two groups, one is the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), and the other is Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The first one covers the simple communication skills (for example being able to communicate with a shop assistant), it is context embedded, cognitively undemanding use of a language. The child needs one or two years to acquire it. The second one is that is cognitively and academically more advanced and five to seven years are needed to acquire this context reduced fluency.

## 4 Reading in L1 and L2

The aim of this part is to give a brief insight of different ideas about native reading and comprehension processes that can be applied to foreign languages on certain conditions. In the other hand it describes the models of foreign language reading that are in close connection with native language reading comprehension, bilingualism and related cognitive theories.

### 4.1 Process models

#### 4.1.1 Bottom-up - approaches

Bottom-up refers to language processing starting at the lowest levels, i.e., linguistic information such as letter recognition and word recognition, proceeding to sentence level syntax, and then to the discourse level in a serial fashion. In other words, reading is decoding the linguistic information and is text-based processing. *LaBerge* and *Samuels* (1974) and *Gough* (1972) model the reading process as a series of stages, each of which is complete before the next stage begins.

#### 4.1.2 Top-down approaches

The term is used to refer to approaches in which the expectations of the reader play a crucial, even dominant, role in the processing of the text. The reader is seen as bringing hypotheses to bear on the text, and using the text data to confirm or deny the hypotheses. *Goodman* (1978) is the best-known name associated with these approaches. He concluded that readers sample the text, employing text redundancy to reduce the amount of data needed and using their language knowledge to guide their guesses. He said that reading was a psycholinguistic guessing game.

#### 4.1.3 Interactive approaches

The best – known model is the interactive-compensatory one created by *Stanovich* (1980). This model is the synthesis of the bottom-up and top-down models and the comprehension is due to the simultaneous use of contextual information and different higher order skills. This approach differs from the top-down model with the idea of not only the semantical process leads the basic processes but they also adjust to the lower levels. *Stanovich* says that a weakness in one area of knowledge or skill can be compensated for by strength in another area.

## **4.2 Models of foreign language reading**

There are two tendencies in the literature of examination of the relations between reading in a foreign language and reading in the mother language:

- 1) Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis
- 2) Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis.

### **4.2.1 Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis**

The main point of the hypothesis is that the reading skill in a foreign language mainly depends on the competence of the foreign language, such as the reading strategy of the mother language can be transferred to the foreign language only in case the reader has reached a certain level of competence in the second language. It is concluded by *Clarke* (1979) that a language competence ceiling effectively prohibits the complete transfer of L1 reading skills to the second language.

An other study of *Clarke* (1980) is known as Short Circuit Hypothesis, which concludes that the reader is able to transfer his reading strategies from the L1 to L2 only in case he has reached a certain level in L2. Limited control over the language causes “short circuits” so the good reader’s foreign language reading performance reverts to the level of poor readers.

### **4.2.2 Language Interdependence Hypothesis**

Contrary to the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis the Interdependence Hypothesis proposed that the development of literacy-related skills in L2 was partly a function of prior development of literacy-related skills in L1. (*Cummins*, 1979b, 1991a). This hypothesis implied that L1 and L2 academic skills were manifestations of a common underlying proficiency. Once literacy-related skills are acquired (just like reading and writing) they are at our disposition in the L2, too (*Bernhardt* and *Kamil*, 1995).

### **4.2.3 Reading in a foreign language: a reading problem or a language problem?**

*Alderson* (1984) was the first to put the following question whether “reading in L2 is a reading problem or a language problem” (*Alderson*, 1984, p. 1.) that is to say if the L2 reading is more determined by the L1 reading skills or by the L2 competence or by both. Empirical research supports that all three are partly true; but language skills has a more determined



effect on L2 reading. With the growth of the L2 competence the role of the reading skill in L1 increases too.

## **5 Empirical research of foreign language reading comprehension and the usage of reading strategies**

### **5.1 Research questions and hypotheses**

The aim of the research was to determine the degree of reading comprehension and language skills of students aged 15 in Hungarian-German minority bilingual secondary schools that are needed for their further language development.

Only two surveys have been conducted so far about German reading comprehension concerning Hungarian German nationality students (*Drescher J. Attila*, 1992, 1993, 1995; *Györi-Nagy Sándor*, 1986). The earlier results showed very weak German reading comprehension of German nationality students: ‘for these students German counts as a foreign language, which means extra task, not bilingual knowledge’ (*Drescher J. Attila*, 1995. p.60.).

In the course of the research we were searching for the answers to these questions:

1. To which degree do the 15-year-old children who go to a Hungarian-German minority secondary school in Hungary understand a foreign language reading comprehension?
2. What is the effect of foreign language competence and applied reading strategy on foreign language reading?
3. Does a practicing language teacher have the opportunity within the formal education to develop the foreign language comprehension? If yes, what opportunity does the teacher have?

The summary of the research hypotheses:

1. The quality of foreign language reading comprehension of students’ aged 15 in Hungarian-German minority bilingual secondary schools according to internationally valid and reliable measuring devices will be acceptable for most

students. It means they will be able to understand unknown, authentic texts. They will be able to understand the explicit and implicit messages of the texts in a global term and in terms of details too, so that they can answer the questions related to the text in an adequate way.

- 2a. Both foreign language competence and the usage of reading strategies have an effect on foreign language comprehension but according to our expectations the first one has a more significant effect on it.
- 2b. To have a good foreign language comprehension the reader has to achieve a certain level of foreign language competence. In the lack of this understanding it is not possible. The limit of language knowledge, which is necessary to the tasks related, can change according to the complexity of the tasks related to the texts.
- 2c. Successful and skilful readers who simultaneously have a higher level language competence apply reading comprehension strategies needing complex, greater cognitive efforts more often and much more effectively than those readers who are not so good at reading comprehension and language competence.
3. A practicing language teacher has countless opportunities to endear, practice and develop the foreign language reading with his or her students. With this the teacher can contribute to the development of foreign language competence, vocabulary and to the formation of a better foreign language comprehension skill.

## **5.2 Measuring instruments**

In the course of the survey we used two internationally applied standard tests. The German competence test was developed by the Goethe-Institut-Inter-Nationes (GI) and it is the adaptation of a level measuring test version for intermediate courses. This test measured primarily vocabulary, and grammatical knowledge. The German reading comprehension test was also developed by GI. It is an adaptation of its central intermediate language examination test (ZMP).

Besides the test two questionnaires were used. The first table shows the measuring instruments used in the research.

**Table 1.** Measuring instruments, measured skills and time limit

Measuring instruments	Measured skills	Time (minutes)
Competence test	Language competence, Procedural knowledge	90
Reading comprehension test	Reading comprehension Procedural knowledge	80
A questionnaire about German reading comprehension	Metacognitive (declarative and conditional) knowledge, Metacognitive control and strategy usage, Metacognitive skills, experience and consciousness	10
Student data sheet	-	15

### 5.3 Sample and data gathering

The survey took place in November 2004 on full sample. The second table summarizes the participating schools and the student number.

**Table 2:** Schools, classes, student number participating in survey

Sch. code	Schools	Classes	Student number	The ratio of students in the language preparatory class (%)
1.	Koch Valéria Óvoda, Általános Iskola és Középiskola (Pécs)	10.A	33	-
		10.B	33	-
2.	Német Nemzetiségi Gimnázium és Közgazdasági Szakközépiskola (Pilisvörösvár)	10.A	37	-
3.	Magyarországi Németek Általános Művelődési Központja (Baja)	9.B	13	100
		10.A	21	-
		10.C	17	47
4.	Berzsenyi Dániel Evangélikus Gimnázium (Líceum) és Kollégium (Sopron)	9.C	13	85
		10.B	12	-
		10.C	23	68
5.	Leőwey Klára Gimnázium (Pécs)	10.D	24	-
		10.E	24	-
		10.G	14	-
		10.A	32	100
6.	Német Nemzetiségi Gimnázium és Kollégium (Budapest)	10.B	29	-
		10.A	26	92
7.	Tamási Áron Általános Iskola és Német Két Tannyelvű Nemzetiségi Gimnázium (Budapest)	10.A	26	92
<b>Σ</b>	<b>7 iskola</b>	<b>15 osztály</b>	<b>351</b>	

## **5.4 The coherence between foreign language reading comprehension and foreign language competence**

### **5.4.1 German reading comprehension**

Regarding the samples we can determine that the average performance on the reading comprehension tests (59,35%) exceeds the level which is needed to pass the ZMP reading comprehension test (58%). In Hungarian terms this examination would match the state recognized advanced and intermediate level examinations (depending on the performance:  $ZMP \geq 80\%$  - advanced level;  $58\% \leq ZMP < 80\%$  - intermediate level). This way, in our case, those who were in the weak category have fulfilled an intermediate level in the Hungarian terms. The strong point of the students could be experienced by the ability measured by the first task (72,97%) and by the third task (66,49%), that is by localization the relevant information and by understanding the opinions and viewpoints, which were not always expressed in an explicit way.

Considering the German reading comprehension most of our students have the greatest lack in two areas: on the one hand by completing semantically related tasks in a lexically and semantically adequate way (fourth task) on the other hand the lack of understanding and localization of the key statements of this kind of texts (second task).

### **5.4.2 Competence tests**

The average performance of the competence test was nearly 60%. The standard deviation of the sample was big ( $s=13,26$ ). The difference between the worst and best performances was 71,2%. According to the performance categories of the competence test 36,3% of the students reached the M3+ (strong intermediate level) and O (advanced level) categories that ensures stable bases for the further application of the German language. If we add the M3- performance category (average intermediate level) we cover 71,2% of the students. It demonstrates that the German language competence on the researched group is good. According to the Hungarian Language Exam System 23% of our students have a basic level of German language competence.

### **5.4.3 Coherence between the foreign language reading comprehension and the foreign language competence**

The coherence between the foreign language reading as a dependent variable, and the foreign language competence as an independent variable demonstrates that the connection between them is strongly significant ( $p=0,000$ ). The findings demonstrate that better German reading comprehension yields better language competence. In our research the candidates have to reach at least M3+ language competence level to be able to solve 83% of the tasks correctly. But good language competence does not guarantee the quality of foreign language reading comprehension.

The level of foreign language competency needed to the expected performance of reading comprehension does not show a constant threshold level. Knowing a language plays a more significant role in the case of experiences requiring a greater cognitive effort than in exercises where students do not need to use complex reading comprehension strategies.

### **5.5 Coherence between the foreign language reading comprehension and metacognition**

Studying the metacognitive skills of students we can conclude that a strong correlation can be found between students' self-assessment and German ( $p<0.01$ ) reading performance; candidates know their own skills and abilities. 73,8% of the students use reading strategies, as reason of the usage candidates mention the ease of comprehension and the efficiency of task solving.

By applying multivariable linear regression analysis we examined how the German reading performance depended on reading strategies. All of the explained variants were 58,3% in case we take the result of the competence test into consideration.

Further on we examined the effort of 3 strategies used most frequently by the students (Strategy D – guessing the unknown words with the help of other parts of the text; Strategy G – drawing the conclusion while reading; Strategy H – summing up the contents of the text in their head). The way of the examination was to take the students' language competence into consideration. The positive or negative effect of the 3 strategies influencing the reading comprehension depends on the user's language competence. Consequently summing up the contents of a text in one's head and guessing the unknown words from a context, and drawing the conclusion while preparing a text can be effective only in that case if the reader has sufficient lexical and grammatical knowledge. The students with poor reading performance –

though they use the context to ease their reading comprehension instinctively – are hindered by their missing language competence to be able to use their proper reading strategies with good results.

## 5.6 Summary

Regarding the hypothesis connected with the questions raised in the Introduction the following answers can be given concerning our samples based on the results of the present survey:

Hypothesis 1:

53% of our students have gained intermediate level, 18% advanced level German language competence, as for the reading comprehension performance 8% of them have gained advanced level and 48% intermediate level performance.

The good performance of the students, that visited the “0”-year German course (a preparatory year before students start academic studies), is worthy of note. It emphasizes the efficiency of this educational form. Almost all the students (even the majority of those who have learnt German only for 1 year) are able to understand simpler texts, have got the basic lexical and grammatical competence that makes them able to understand the written and oral texts of everyday life. M3+ and O categories are characteristic of 36% of the students taking part in the research; it means an advanced level competence that is sufficient for more difficult learning tasks. This language competence makes possible to use the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in a foreign language. It makes possible to understand and produce grammatically complex, thematically high level authentic texts.

Hypothesis 2a:

Both variables have an effect on the performance of German reading comprehension but foreign language competence proved to be the most significant ( $p=0,01$ ;  $R^2_{100}=57,9\%$ ). Using strategies was not so significant ( $R^2_{100}=2,9\%$ ). By foreign language competence we mean principally the knowledge of adequate vocabulary and grammatical structures so we have measured mainly this with tests. So we can say, those students – taking part in our research – who are aware of the German grammar and who have got sufficient German vocabulary will probably perform well in understanding foreign language reading.

After having narrowed down the reading comprehension strategies to those strategies used by the students relatively many times, using strategies become more stressed (about 20-30 % of all explained variances).

Our research hypothesis has been proved to be true only partly, inaccuracy can be found by the importance of using the reading comprehension strategy. On the basis of our researching results we would change our hypothesis in a way that only certain reading comprehension strategies will have significant effect during the foreign language reading comprehension.

#### Hypothesis 2b:

While proving the former (2a) hypothesis we could see that one of the preliminary conditions of good foreign language reading is good foreign language competence. But at the same time good language competence does not yield always good foreign language reading comprehension. According to our data achieve a good and a very good (=advanced) reading comprehension performance, students need at least a M3+ (strong intermediate level) German language competence. This language competence level (or language threshold level) is necessary to understand grammatically high level tests. It makes possible for the cognitive academic language proficiency – which are necessary to be able to solve exercises needing great cognitive efforts – to be transferred into a foreign language and work effectively. This language competence changes depending on the difficulty of the exercises, so it is not static. We managed to prove it when we added the competence test performance belonging to different performance levels of exercises with different difficulties. Referring to our result we may say the threshold level of the foreign language competence changes depending on the given text and the complexity of the exercises belonging to it so we managed to prove the above hypothesis.

#### Hypothesis 2c:

According to the reading comprehension and the usage of reading comprehension strategies the effect of 3 complex strategies seemed to be relevant above all (Strategy D – guessing the unknown words with the help of other parts of the text; Strategy G – drawing the conclusion while reading; Strategy H – summing up the contents of the text in their head). From these strategies the usage of frequency of the least difficult, common D strategy with increasing reading performance has reduced. But in the case of more complex strategies we

can see increasing. With increasing competence level the usage of frequency of the given strategies also increases. Strategy D is an exception to this, while using it, strategy D reduces from M3- competence level. The reason of it can be found in the increasing lexical knowledge of the readers.

In the course of our research it has been proved that students with poorer reading comprehension performance also frequently use the researched strategies, but due to their inadequate language knowledge they can not make the best of its beneficial results as they were supposed to. So that part of the hypothesis – where we assumed that the reading comprehension strategies requiring complex, greater cognitive efforts are used less frequently by readers with poor language competence and reading comprehension – was not successful.

Reading strategies using by the students show their positive effect only in the case of good language competence. In the lack of it they will rather hinder the readers in a successful usage of the strategies depends on the complexity of the given strategies.

So the part of our hypothesis concerning the efficiency of the used complex strategies has been proved undoubtedly.

### Hypothesis 3.

The language teacher's main aim on the lessons is to teach independent, autonomous learning to the students. The preliminary condition of this is being able to understand and interpret several types of foreign texts and having the skill to remark upon them. The ideal of learning-based society, the theory of lifelong learning demand from schools during the teaching process, that they should emphasize competence transmitting and the developing of problem-solving, creative thinking in contradiction to transmitting ready material of knowledge. In order to achieve this aim a practising language teacher has got several opportunities to develop foreign language reading comprehension supposing that the student has attained a satisfactory foreign language competence level and his/her skills of native reading comprehension answer to the required expectation.

The starting point of it can be class work, which can be extended to out of school activities too. The language teacher's main aim is to make the students like and motivate them to read on the given language – besides formal education – in order to entertain and to spend their free time actively. The teacher can achieve it by the content of education (with the help of historical, literary, cultural topics) and by special occasions (in the classroom, on school trips, camps, by visiting the target country, etc.).



Developing reading comprehension can take place on the lessons or besides the lessons. In both case the practising teacher can help very much. The teacher's task is to select the texts (suitable for the students' age, interest, the suitable difficulty), to activate the background knowledge, to form varied exercises and social forms, to transmit and to make the students be aware of strategies, techniques adequate to the different types of exercises and aims. Developing reading competence and reading comprehension can be achieved not only during a language lesson but on any lessons.

If we want to gain suitable reading comprehension it is naturally indispensable to form the suitable vocabulary. We can do it with the traditional "foreign word – Hungarian word" analogy, but there are several other methods, one of the most efficient is reading itself. By means of independent reading the development of vocabulary and reading comprehension transcend the school walls thus the language teacher achieves his or her most important aim: to develop the students' desire for independent reading in order to make inquiries and entertain. So our last hypothesis has been proved.

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