

How to do the additional tasks

This guide aims to help you make efficient use of the additional tasks, which in turn will enhance your reading comprehension skills in Polish. Last but not least, the guide also suggests how to improve your study skills. It has been created as a comprehensive, but not exhaustive resource. Whatever your level initially, we hope you can use this guide to build your confidence as you learn the language, adapt your learning strategies and that you will soon see yourself progressing, steadily, if not by leaps and bounds.

General overview

Within each module there are tasks that refer to the same text. Each text is either the original version of an authentic newspaper or magazine article, or in a few instances have the original texts been slightly abridged. Most of the texts are 500 words long in order to resemble in length the materials that will appear in your final exam. The language of the articles has not been amended so you will get a taste of authentic journalistic writing in Polish.

The texts are accompanied by all or some of the following tasks:

- Key vocabulary: content words
- Key vocabulary: collocations
- Key vocabulary: conjunctions and discourse markers
- Conjunctions and discourse markers in sentences
- Conjunctions and discourse markers in extracts
- Summaries of paragraphs
- Translations of sentences
- Mock exam

The bulk of the tasks use a multiple-choice format and the options are predominantly in English. You need to select the option that best reflects the original text. If you select the wrong option, a pop-up will provide you with a brief prompt to highlight why it is inaccurate and which part of the sentence or paragraph you should pay closer attention to so as to deduce the appropriate meaning. A few tasks will require you to use Polish more actively by either having to select options or even feeding missing words into the texts.

The tasks are not interdependent so there is no requirement to do them all or follow the suggested order. However, you may find that focusing on key vocabulary and on discourse markers first will help you progress more successfully in translation and summary tasks.

The mock exam tasks are the only tasks that are not accompanied by any model answers. However, you are welcome to submit your work to your tutor for feedback.

Read the text

Start by quickly reading (scanning) through the text. This will help you gain an overview of the article before you start doing the exercises. Focus on the topic area as this will limit the possible readings of the text. You are likely to notice that a few words or phrases are frequently repeated in the text. These are likely to be key words. If you are not familiar with them, look them up in a dictionary.

Key vocabulary

The aim of this task is to check whether you are familiar with the key words and phrases that are essential to a grasp of the general and detailed message of the text. Doing these exercises will help you consolidate your vocabulary.

This activity is in multiple-choice format. You will need to select the English equivalent that best reflects the meaning of the word as used in the text. For example,

0. Miasto
 - a) Country
 - b) Region
 - c) Town

The only correct answer is (c) as the other ones denote different entities and thus have their own names in Polish - or any other language, for that matter.

Sometimes you may be offered translations that are all correct, but only one of them will be appropriate to the given context. For example, if the text is about Wawel, you may get the following item:

0. Zamek
 - a) Lock
 - b) Castle
 - c) Zipper

All of the above options are viable, but since the text is on Wawel, which is a castle, only option B is acceptable. It is essential that you appreciate that some words have more than one meaning and you need to be able to differentiate between them when reading new texts.

How to choose a dictionary

A dictionary is an indispensable tool for language learning so be sure to choose the best available and use it on regular basis. Most English-Polish dictionaries address the needs of Polish students learning English. There are, however, a few that cater for the needs of foreigners learning Polish. These may provide irregular forms as headwords (usually with reference to the base form), and they may also give the necessary inflections to help you expand your productive skills.

Before deciding which dictionary to choose, spend some time in a library such as the UCL SSEES library and use a number of different dictionaries when working on a text. Look up the same words and phrases in a few different dictionaries. This will give you an insight into what kind of information each dictionary provides, whether you find the information readily comprehensible and – most importantly – useful for your learning purpose. Do not rush into a decision to get a dictionary just based on a price or a recommendation without having actually seen and used the dictionary for your study.

Some dictionaries offer a CD or free online access, which are tools that definitely save you time. However, bear in mind that exams permit the use of printed dictionaries only. So practise using these too.

How to use a dictionary

Both printed and online dictionaries are constrained by space and therefore they do not contain all possible meanings or offer all possible translations. You need therefore to

have a flexible approach, try to infer a possible meaning or look the word up in a different dictionary, ideally one with a larger number of entry words, or indeed cross-check from English back to Polish.

Each entry has a headword usually followed by grammatical information such as whether the word is a noun, verb, adjective or adverb. It is important to make good use of this information as the English equivalent is not always immediately helpful, for example:

Czytać (verb) *read*

Lektura (noun) *read*

Each of the above words will be used in a different context in a sentence or phrase. As you have surely noticed, the Polish words do not look alike although they relate to the same semantic field:

Wielu Polaków czyta książki Kapuścińskiego. „Imperium” to ulubiona lektura współczesnych polityków.

Many Poles read books by Kapuściński. “Empire” is a favourite read [book]among contemporary politicians.

The grammatical information for each entry word could also offer endings such as the plural form or a case ending for nouns, comparative forms for adjectives and adverbs, or present tense personal endings, perfective and imperative forms for verbs. Make sure you know where this information is available, how to look for it and apply it. Some dictionaries offer irregular forms or the most commonly used forms as entry words too, for example:

Iść – to go

Poszła [she went] – compare *iść*

Make sure to peruse carefully the whole entry before you assign a meaning to the word you are looking up. Remember, the first meaning need not always be the right one for you.

Furthermore, the meaning you find may be right but the English equivalent may not be idiomatic in a given context. For example, if you are looking up the word *psuć* to translate the phrase: *skandalzespustreputacjępartii*, your dictionary may provide you with the word ‘spoil’. However, in English the word ‘reputation’ (*reputacja*) is more likely to go together with ‘ruin’ instead. Similarly, if the text contains the word *kredyt* in the sentence *Grecjaubiegasię u MFW o kredyt.*, the translation is more likely to be ‘loan’ – ‘Greece is seeking a loan from the IMF’.

Most dictionaries list examples of phrases or sentences or idiomatic expressions at the end of the entry and you may find the applicable use there, so never forget to look closely also at the words surrounding the one you want in your text. For example, the phrase *kredytipoteczny* translates as one word in English – ‘mortgage’, so too *kredytzaufania* means ‘confidence’.

In a nutshell, be prepared to search more actively both in dictionaries and in your own mental lexicon for synonyms or words that are similar in meaning, and more appropriate in English. If your first language is not English, approach your English

teacher for help. An excellent way of improving your English and Polish at the same time is by buddying up with a native-English class mate.

What does this word mean?

Some words have a straightforward meaning, for example *słownik* means 'a dictionary'. However, in most cases the meaning is not so clear-cut, or a word may in fact have more than one meaning; for example, the word *nauka* can stand for 'knowledge', 'lesson' or 'school' etc. Moreover, although the Polish word *nauka* is a noun, in some contexts it can be translated as a verb, for instance:

Nauka języków przychodzi mi łatwo. I find it easy to learn languages.

Zabierz się do nauki! Start revising.

It is paramount to make sure that you understand the context in which the word is used – both the immediate context of words surrounding the item in question, but also the context of the topic area. One of the most common mistakes that learners make is to try and fit the meaning of the word that they are familiar with into a context where the word is used in a different meaning. Therefore, make sure to double-check the meaning of the words that you think you know, especially in cases when you feel that the sentence or paragraph is not logical, when it does not seem to make much sense. The best strategy then is to step back and look up all the words. This may seem to be time-consuming, but it tends to bring the best results.

Inferring or guessing meaning

When reading full texts, however, you may find that you do not need to look up every unfamiliar word in the text to get the gist or even the relevant detail. Instead, you can resort to inference, based on:

- inter-lingual cues, i.e. those connected with the relation between the target language and the native language, for instance: *tekst* 'text', *ekonomia* 'economy', *hedonistyczny* 'hedonistic' or *googlować* 'to google'.
 - But beware of 'false friends', i.e. words that are similar in form but dissimilar in meaning: *wart* 'worth', *as* 'ace', or *sad* 'orchard'. Some dictionaries or grammars offer lists of such 'false friends'. However, they are not as frequent as the more common international words stemming from Greek or Latin, which normally share the meaning in both Polish and English.
- intra-lingual cues, which are found in the target language and require a sound basic knowledge of its morphological and syntactic structure, for instance prefix *naj-* will invariably indicate the superlative form of an adjective or adverb, the suffix *-ł* on a verb indicates the past tense use, whereas the conjunction *że* is likely to introduce a subordinate clause. Sound acquaintance with rudimentary grammar is therefore a huge asset when developing your reading skills. Consequently, you should continue working on your grammar.
- extra-lingual or contextual cues, which are also extremely useful because they relate to the real world and make it possible to make certain predictions. The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows (cf Krantz 1991: 24-25; Brown & Atkins 1988:150). However, remember that you have a different level of pre-existing knowledge both about the world and about language learning from that of your class mates. Thus each of you will

progress in their studies at a different pace. Do not try to compete with others and compare your progress unless you want, and can, to draw appropriate conclusions that will make your learning more efficient.

Maintain a vocabulary book

Once you have read a few authentic texts you will get some idea of which words tend to appear frequently in most of them; these are probably the words that you are more likely to come across in other texts too. For best results in retaining such vocabulary, it is recommended that you record them in a special vocabulary book and revise them on a regular basis. Alternatively, you may like to add new meanings or equivalents to the dictionary you are using when studying. Some learners find it helpful to record longer extracts that include the particular word or phrase since that can provide better contexts for understanding their use.

Do not be discouraged if you find that you need to look up one and the same word up on several occasions – you will be pleased to know that that is quite normal. So do not let this dampen your motivation. It takes a long time to learn a substantial amount of vocabulary, but you will notice that it gets slightly easier once you get a vocabulary-learning regime in place.

(For more exercises on learning vocabulary in context see Gębal 2009, Lewiński 2001, Seretny 2003, Szelc-Mays 1999.)

Collocations

The tasks on collocations aim to help you improve your ability to notice pairs or larger groups of words that tend to appear together. They are habitually juxtaposed with a frequency greater than chance. For this reason it is useful to be familiar with them so as to make relevant predictions, which in turn facilitates more efficient text comprehension.

The collocation tasks are matching exercises, i.e. you need to match beginnings with endings such as verbs with nouns or verbs with prepositions. For example:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| 1) spędzać | a) pieniądze |
| 2) wydawać | b) reformę |
| 3) przeprowadzać | c) urlop |

The Polish verb *spędzać* collocates mainly with expressions of time, such as *spędzać czas, urlop, życie* etc. However, in the context of money, the 'spend' verb has to be *wydawać*.

It is useful to keep a record of collocations in your vocabulary book as you are likely to see such groups quite frequently in texts. It is important to remember that the elements of each collocation do not need to be immediately adjacent, so it is very useful to be able to spot them and make the required connection, for example:

Rząd zapowiada przeprowadzenie od dawna oczekiwanej przez środowisko medyczne reformy służby zdrowia.

The government has announced that it will introduce the NHS reform that has long been awaited by medical circles.

Conjunctions and discourse markers

The activities on conjunctions and discourse markers aim to help you improve your ability to appreciate the general organisation of an argument, to spot where examples or contradictions are offered, to infer relationships among events, in short, to observe all the signposts in the text. You need to be able to appreciate how all the parts of the text hang together, what makes them into a coherent entity. Just as in English, conjunctions and discourse markers are used in all types of texts and they help the author to guide the reader through the arguments to the final conclusion.

Naturally, no one uses a vast array of conjunctions and discourse markers in their texts, but everyone should be able to comprehend them in order to guarantee the understanding of the key points. Conjunctions tend to indicate such relations as cause-effect, so make sure you differentiate between *dlatego* 'that is why' and *dlatego że* 'because' as they either introduce a reason or an outcome:

Rząd nie przeprowadził reform, dlatego kraj przechodzi teraz kryzys.

The government has not carried out the reforms and that is why the country is now in crisis.

Kraj przechodzi kryzys, dlatego że rząd nie przeprowadził reform.

The country is now in crisis because the government has not carried out the reforms.

As you can see from the above examples, getting the conjunctions wrong means getting the key information wrong, even if you get the individual clauses right. In truth, you need only think of the effect of confusing *therefore* and *because* in English (or their equivalents in your own language) to appreciate how badly wrong things can go if you misinterpret such common signposts. Clearly, the problem is aggravated in Polish by the close formal similarity of the two expressions in question.

Similarly, discourse markers can indicate whether the following information is an example to support the previously stated argument, or whether, on the contrary, the following clause or sentence will provide counter-arguments which may lead the author to prefer an opposing or a different idea.

Wielu Polaków, choć są niewierzący, postanawia ochrzcić swoje dzieci. (an indication of a contradiction)

Many Poles, although they are non-believers, decide to have their children baptised.

Wielu niewierzących Polaków, czyli przede wszystkim mieszkańcy dużych miast, postanawia ochrzcić swoje dzieci. (providing more detailed information)

Many non-believing Poles, that is primarily those mainly living in cities, decide to have their children baptised.

Just as in English, some Polish discourse markers are more common than others, for example *jednak* 'however', *pozatem* 'furthermore', *więc* 'so'. It is important to be able to

recognise them in the text and – more importantly –to comprehend how those words modulate the argument presented in the text.

(For more exercises on discourse markers see Kubiak 2009, Seretny 2007, Seretny 2008. For further theoretical discussion see Aitchison 1992, Crystal 2003, Trudgill 1992.)

Grammar

It is not essential to learn the ‘technical’ terms used in grammar, but some familiarity with them will undoubtedly make the transition between theory and practice smoother.

To understand how the individual vocabulary items used in a sentence or clause relate to one another, you need to be fairly familiar with the basic rules of grammar. As mentioned earlier in this guide, some irregular forms may be provided in the dictionary as headwords, though you are unlikely to find a conjugated form of a regular verb as a dictionary entry. You should therefore make sure you continue to enhance your knowledge of the grammar. Practise the forms by doing as many exercises as possible (for example use Bielec 2004, Janicki 1977, Kowalska 2008, Kucharczyk 1995, Lechowicz&Podsiadły 2001, Małolepwsza&Szymkiewicz 2006, Skorupa&Lipinska 2010).

You should also pay close attention to the function of a specific grammatical form. It will be indispensable in decoding the meaning of longer extracts. For example, when discussing age, Polish uses a structure to denote ‘how many years someone or something *has*’:

Wawel ma ponad tysiąc lat.

[Wawel has above thousand years]

Wawel is more than a thousand years old.

It is also vital to observe the rules of how words in a clause or sentence are ordered. Unlike the general tendency of English, Polish does not have a fixed word order, although it may use the familiar subject-verb-object (SVO) structure:

Szkoła będzie mogła śledzić miejsca pracy i zarobki byłych uczniów.

The school will be able to monitor the jobs and income of its former students.

Quite often, however, other structures apply, for example object-verb-subject (OVS). Quite often, other considerations apply and the subject can come at the very end (often in English too), without affecting comprehension, for example:

Najbardziej znanym polskim miastem jest Kraków.

The best known Polish city is Kraków.

In other cases, however, especially where the real structure is OVS, it is essential to apply extra-lingual knowledge when decoding a sentence. This is usually evident in sentences that have a longer or complex subject, for example:

Akcje sprzedawały największe fundusze: ING, Aviva czy Amplico, a także mniejsze – Warta, Generali.

[Shares-sold-the-largest-funds: ING, Aviva or Amplico, but-also-smaller – Warta, Generali.]

Shares were sold by the largest funds, such as ING, Aviva or Amplico, but also by smaller ones such as Warta or Generali.

Shares (or any other financial instruments) tend not to sell but be sold, so it is easy to deduce that the list of fund management companies constitutes in fact the real (and logical) subject of the sentence.

The OVS structure is also applied when the subject is referred to throughout the paragraph and therefore its location within the text is important, i.e. it should be close to all parts that relate to it and – more importantly – are grammatically dependent on it.

*Niektóre preeelowskie przepisy są od wielu lat martwe, ale z niektórych wciąż się korzysta. Przykładem może być **art. 254 § 1 kodeksu karnego z 1997 roku**[subject], **który przepisany został**[reference to the subject to introduce subordinate clause] w niemal niezmiennym kształcie z kodeksu z 1969 roku. **Wprowadzaon**[pronoun referring back to the subject introduced two clauses previously] *de facto* odpowiedzialność zbiorową.*

Some communist regulations have been dead for years, however some are still applied [nowadays]. Example-can-be-article-254-part-1-of-criminal-code-of-1997-which-was-copied-almost-in-unchanged-form-from-code-of-1969.Introduces-it-de-facto-responsibility-collective.

Some communist regulations have been dead for years, however some are still in force. Article 254, para 1 of criminal code 1997 may serve as an example. It was copied from the 1969 code in an almost unchanged form. *De facto*, it introduces collective responsibility.

The initial sentence indicates that some communist regulations are still in place in present-day Poland. The remainder of the paragraph is devoted to presenting an illustration, one provision in a particular law, to support this premise. The example is at the centre of the argument so it is positioned in the middle of the paragraph for easy referencing throughout and for the ease of grammatical flow.

It is therefore vital to process the preceding text before arriving at the conclusion whether to interpret the structure as SVO or OVS, or whether in fact the structure is different in yet another respect. For that reason you need to 'multitask' when working on a sentence, i.e. you have to understand all the vocabulary, process the grammar, link the meaning of the sentence to that in the previous part of the text, as well as resorting to any external knowledge that may be helpful in decoding the relations among the parts of the text. It is not always an easy task so take as much time as you need. Finally, identify which area seems to be causing you the most problems, and then try to find a strategy by which to overcome this hurdle and progress more successfully in developing your reading comprehension skills.

Rules of Discourse

Most textual miscomprehension is not due to any failure to parse the sentences or clauses or understand individual words. A far more important source of problems in communication is that we so often fail to understand the writer's intentions (cf. Johnson

2001:31), or we might fail to understand the structure of the argument, i.e. how the text is organised and where the salient points are to be identified.

The main argument may be presented in a way different from what you are used to, or – more commonly – the paragraph is organised in a manner that you are not familiar with and which may throw you off the metaphorical path that you are more used to following before arriving at your destination. So be prepared for the unexpected, for structures that are unusual to you – however, never lose sight of the simple fact that they are entirely usual to millions of other people, the Poles. So take risks in extracting information, but also make sure you double-check your ideas against the text too.

Some authors make extensive use of explicit discourse markers: they signpost their text so that their thought process is clear and easy to follow. However, the concept of ‘clear’ and ‘easy to follow’ may differ from culture to culture. Furthermore, to convey his/her view, an author may use emotionally laden words and irony, both of which require near-native language proficiency for their perception and comprehension. For your own benefit and development, highlight any instances of challenging phrases, sentences or even paragraphs and revisit them on a regular basis or supplement them with other examples that share the particular features.

In any event, first detect the main idea, examples that justify it, and contradictions that provide a counter-argument. Part of your learning strategy must be learning how to separate more important from less important information (Careel & Gajdusek & Wise 2000: 233).

The most common, though not fool-proof, way to follow an argument is to examine the initial sentence in each paragraph. These have a two-fold function. Firstly, they link back to the previous paragraph and thus ensure coherency of the text. For this reason they often start in a discourse marker such as *ponadto* or *dodatkowo* ‘moreover’ to indicate that the main theme is maintained, or *z drugiej strony* or *natomiast* ‘on the other hand, whereas’ to indicate a turn in the line of argument. Secondly, the opening clause tends to provide the main focus of the ensuing paragraph. What follows is an expansion of the argument, usually by way of illustrating the case with examples.

Discourse markers and conjunctions also ensure the smoother and more logical flow of the argument within the paragraph by indicating whether the following clause is a reason, illustration, an exception etc. Their significance to comprehension of the text as a whole cannot be underestimated.

Summaries of Paragraphs

This task aims to test your general understanding of longer written extracts. It is a multiple-choice task. Each paragraph is accompanied by two or three possible summaries, but only one of them is correct. In order to determine which one that is, you need to make sure that you understand the key information as well as the precise nature of the connection between the sentences within the paragraph as a whole.

If you select an incorrect summary, a pop-up hint will indicate why this summary is not acceptable. Make sure you read the paragraph again before your second attempt.

Translation of sentences

This task aims to test your detailed understanding of brief extracts. It is a multiple-choice task. Each sentence is accompanied by two or three possible translations, but only one of them is correct. In order to determine which one that is, you need to make

sure you understand both the key information and detail, and – if applicable – any connection between clauses.

If you select an incorrect translation, a pop-up clue will hint why it is not acceptable. Make sure you read the sentence again before your second attempt.

Mock Exam

The mock exam provides you with an example of what to expect in your final examination. However, unlike in the real exam, the mock uses one text for all three tasks. You will need to provide a summary, a translation and answer reading-comprehension questions based on the same extract.

You may like to do the mock exam immediately after you have completed the previous tasks. However, it may be more efficient if you decide to do the mock exam the following day or a couple of days later. In this way you may be able to assess how much vocabulary and discourse information you have absorbed and retained since doing the initial tasks.

There is no key to this task but you are welcome to bring your work to your tutor for comments.

Summary

You produce summaries on daily basis. Quite possibly without even realizing it. Whenever you relate a film you have seen, discuss a book you have read, or talk about your holiday, you are producing an oral summary of the main events. When you take notes during a lecture or when studying in the library, you are producing a written summary of the main items. A summary of a newspaper article is not dissimilar to either of these activities, although it takes a (slightly more prescribed) written form.

In all cases, summaries communicate the gist, i.e. the most important information, and provide some additional but RELEVANT information to present the process, outcome, decision, or argument, and make the final text coherent and logical.

When summarising a text, ideally you could use the following strategies (for more ideas and examples see McMillan 2006:166-167; Brown & Atkins 1988:163):

1. Read the rubric and any information about the text. If possible, make preliminary predictions as to the text's content, purpose and mode.
2. Read the original text thoroughly.
3. Recognise clusters of grammatically allied words. Subliminally, you will be grouping words in clusters according to their natural alliances. This obviously depends on the level of your language proficiency.
4. Take cues from punctuation. As you read, you will gain some understanding by interpreting the text using the cues of full stops and commas, for example to help you gain understanding of what you are reading. The importance of punctuation to comprehension is vital.
5. Identify the signpost words (conjunctions and discourse markers). These will help guide you, the reader, through the logical progression that the author has mapped out for you.
6. Pick out the key topic sentence.

7. Highlight the main points of the text; locate the explicit and implicit main ideas in each paragraph. You can do this by underlining key sentences that plainly carry the argument or make the main points.
8. Discriminate between information that is essential and non-essential to communicating the key message.
9. Perhaps draw a diagram to show the main ideas in the article and show the relationships made between them by the author.
10. Represent the main points in a brief and direct manner, ideally in your own words.
11. Check to ensure that the summary does represent the core message.
12. Check to ensure that your summary is logical and coherent.
13. Double-check points 11&12.

And finally:

1. Write a summary sentence in your own words for each paragraph. Resist the temptation to translate whole sentences or chunks of them.
2. Delete all redundant or trivial points in the text. Cross out sentences that are secondary and so irrelevant to the purpose of the summary. Determine whether the summary will benefit from any (additional) examples.
3. Go through the extended argument. Accept any sentence that follows logically. However, re-examine any sentence containing an incongruity.
4. Double-check.

In a nutshell, be sure you understand the text, look back, rethink, and check and double-check.

Translation

Translation is an art. However, at this stage you are not expected to produce perfect pieces of translation. The purpose of the task is to check your reading comprehension skills. Ideally, in future this will also enable you to translate short extracts for your thesis when you are using original Polish sources for your work.

The final translation should be faithful to the original in meaning and as much in the form as reasonable. However, in order to create an idiomatic English text you sometimes may need compromise the form. Never should you compromise on the meaning.

The most common mistake is translating individual words or phrases without due reference to the context and at substantial cost to the message. It is therefore essential that, before you start translating, you are confident that you understand the text, down to the last detail. Do not start translating until you are satisfied you know exactly what the extract is about.

As in the case of producing a summary, before you finalise your translation, be sure you understand the text, look back, rethink, and check and double-check.

Reading comprehension

To complete this task, you need to retrieve relevant information from the text in order to respond to questions that are posed in English. The answers should also be provided in English. The purpose of this task is to verify your comprehension of the general message but also of details and examples.

Ideally, you should resort to an inference strategy consisting primarily of pre-reading the questions. This will help you make the connection between known and new information. You may then attempt preliminary guesses at the answers. Think also of possible Polish words that you will be looking for in order to locate the section of the text containing the relevant information. However, keep an open mind, since you do not want your expectations to cloud your judgement as to what the original text actually says.

To complete the task successfully you do not actually need to understand all of the text, yet you should scan through it after you have read the questions. Next, skim the text, that is, read it with a view to picking out a specific piece of information by looking for a key word or phrase. Make sure that you understand the context in which the words and phrases are used.

Some questions consist of two parts, for example they may ask for both a 'what' and a 'why'. Make sure you address both parts of the question, otherwise answer cannot be deemed satisfactory. Furthermore, each question is allocated points – the more points, the longer and more elaborate the expected answer. Take this into account when producing your responses.

When providing your answers, use your own words. Before finalising your answers, check and double-check them.

Learning strategies

It is obviously a trivial statement, but if you study in an organised way, you are more likely to make efficient, steady progress in your language learning. You are therefore strongly encouraged to make conscious decisions about HOW you approach new material, revise and consolidate it. For best results, you should reflect on whether the learning strategies you have used are bringing the expected outcomes or whether it is worth testing new strategies. In this way, not only will you improve your language competence, but also acquire what are known as transferable skills, that is, skills that make you aware of different approaches to such areas as time management or problem-solving.

It is far harder to unlearn bad habits than to learn a new skill. Therefore make sure you evaluate your efforts and results as realistically and as objectively as possible. If required, revisit the strategies and methods you use, and amend them if they bring better outcomes. It is also useful to determine whether a fixed routine is conducive to efficient improvement. Some learners benefit from a non-routine, testing new strategies and comparing how efficient they are in helping them achieve improvements (Mayer 2000:88).

Language-learning strategies are any specific actions, behaviours, steps or techniques that you (often intentionally and consciously) use to improve your progress in developing [Polish] language skills (cf. Oxford 1992:18). Bear in mind, however, that each and everyone of us is different, so there is no one-fits-all recipe for successful language

acquisition. In fact, most strategies can be applied in learning other subjects too; for example, note-taking is an important skill and useful in any learning situation. You will remember more if you take your own notes and organise content in the way that you find most logical and accessible. Note-taking is a good strategy, different learners have different ways of doing it. It is also one of the most obviously useful transferable skills.

Remember: there is no universal way of learning. Different learners will use different strategies on different tasks. And there are no simple correlations or one-to-one relationships between particular strategies and successful or unsuccessful reading comprehension (Careel & Gajdusek & Wise 2000: 231). So there is no right or wrong strategy, deciding which one to use is contingent on its proven efficiency. So make sure you select strategies strategically!

Language learning strategies include (see also Tracy 2002:87-98, Oxford)

- re-reading
- copying out
- putting your notes on computer
- highlighting
- writing index cards
- annotating your texts
- mind-mapping
- repeating out loud
- mnemonics
- scrambling words from first letters
- creating stories
- using memory hooks
- memorising grammar rules
- memorising vocabulary
- rote learning
- repeatedly writing down words
- using lists of words in translation
- doing grammar exercises from a textbook or workbook
- translating verbatim into the native language
- asking native-speakers for frequent use of relevant vocabulary
- taking risks in the use of new structures and words
- self-recording and self-monitoring
- reflecting on own performance
- monitoring and evaluating effectiveness of one's own study style / method / strategy
- assessing feedback from tutor and/or learning buddies
- expanding and developing your repertoire of study skills

Learning in the classroom

The number of contact hours is very small so in order to ensure they benefit everyone alike, make sure you come to the classes prepared. You will be more likely to follow the new material and thus learn more efficiently. Your lack of preparation may hinder others in the class, since you may need more feedback to progress in the new area. Therefore try to come to classes prepared in an exemplary fashion. And try to

participate in the classes as much as you can, though without hogging the limelight. Most people learn through doing things and learning a language is no exception.

Take notes. Listen to the tutor and to other classmates and note down all key information. Your class mates are likely to ask relevant questions relating to the particular language area, but they also may enquire about learning strategies. All those discussions may be just as applicable to you too. You may think that you will remember everything that is said in the class, but in fact you will forget about 70% of it within the next couple of days. So notes can be a good and efficient way of retaining essential information. Note-taking is also a good exercise in summary, since you need to determine whether some new information is relevant or not. Your note-taking technique may be improved by discussing your notes with classmates, and trying out and evaluating other techniques. Pay particular attention to layout, ways of highlighting key points and so on. Ask others to draw up a list of 'dos' and 'don'ts' of note-taking, which can later be collated and turned into a hand-out for the class (cf. Brown & :164-165).

Make the best possible use of feedback. When you do an exercise in class or receive marked work back, there will be some commentary highlighting areas which you need to work on. It is essential that you learn from these comments if you want to improve. If you find them difficult to understand, approach your tutor for more detailed commentary (McMillan 2006:376). It is crucial to remember that you should not take negative feedback personally: 'Unfavourable' comments play an important part in the learning process. It is highly improbable that your work will ever be flawless. Therefore you need to know where there are inaccuracies or weak points in your work. You should be able to deal with such comments in a positive manner, and focus on eradicating similar errors from your future work. Remember, we all learn from our mistakes. And it really helps to know where you make them. Hence, make efficient use of feedback

Learning independently

Before starting your revision, make sure you have good organisation skills (cf. Tracy 2002:61; McMillan 2006:79) and know how to approach:

- timetabling and organisation
- tackling procrastination
- the value of time off
- effective work patterns

Make sure you also:

- set realistic targets
- design a sequential and general plan for learning
- monitor your own progress
- self-assess your learning outcomes

It is also helpful to consider some of the following, though bear in mind that not everyone benefits from the same strategies. Consider the following:

- how to make the best use of the facilities, such as library

- how to create effective notes for later reference
- how to make the most of online learning aids
- how to ensure systematic studying
- how to store your material in an organised way

It is proven that the way you perceive yourself, and the way you account for your academic success and failures, have a strong bearing on your motivation and your performance. You are likely to initiate learning, sustain it, direct it and actively involve yourself in it when you believe that success or failure is caused by your own **effort** or lack of it, rather than by factors outside your control such as ability, luck, or the quality of teaching. Thus build up your sense of control over your own work, accept responsibility for your own learning, and develop self-management skills that can help to make you a more successful and effective learner (Brown & Atkins 1988:151).

Learning with a buddy

Some learners are most productive when they study on their own. However, most people value cooperative learning (McMillan 2006:79). Teaming up with others as part of your revision effort is recognised as beneficial in many respects.

Revising need not be a solitary activity. Studying with others may heighten your understanding of how Polish works and allow you to make connections between different elements of vocabulary, grammar and text. Many people find it improves their learning to work on revision with another person studying the same subject.

The study buddy concept is based on a mutual arrangement between two or more students studying the same or similar subjects, who agree to support each other in their learning by conducting joint study sessions within their revision timetable. Examples of suitable revision activities include:

- meeting together to work through homework assignments, comparing answers and analysing the correct approach.
- studying a topic as individuals and then meeting at an agreed time to quiz each other on the topic.
- speaking to each other about a specific topic, for example giving a presentation on your family, hobbies or research area, and then asking follow-up questions.
- sharing resources, such as missed lecture notes, handouts, websites and textbook information.
- working together on formulating answers. This is especially important if you are a non-native English speaker. If your first language is not English, it is useful to team up with a native-English classmate, who may also help you improve your English. If you are a native-English speaker, you will discover that working with non-native speakers gives you more insight into your own language, and also appreciate how languages differ and where there may be pitfalls in your approach to learning Polish.
- providing psychological support when one of your group needs extra motivation or stimulation to study.

More ideas are available in Brown & Atkins (1988:167-169) and McMillan (2006:399).

Self-monitoring

Learning a foreign language is hard work and you may be exposed to failure and negative feedback. For this reason, it is essential that you embrace such events as inherent to the language-learning process and learn how to deal with them. Helplessness, procrastination, task-avoidance, cognitive disengagement and apathy are all forms of defensive reaction, which can often be self-handicapping because, despite their intended protectiveness, they can limit personal growth, in life as in learning (Zimmerman 2000:213).

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