

Surveying language and text structure

RdL&T

RdComp

RdCrit

The purpose of the activity

This activity involves scanning a text to get an overview of its organisation and clues to its content. It enables the learner to skip some parts and concentrate on relevant sections when setting a purpose for reading the text or fine-tuning their ideas about an appropriate purpose for reading.

The teaching points

The learners will survey language and text structure at both paragraph and extended-text level. At the paragraph level, the learners might notice whether the author has used any of the following:

- language to compare and contrast
- language to indicate cause and effect
- language to indicate a problem and solution
- time sequence
- key words
- lists.

At the extended-text level, the learners might identify the text form and look for the conventions of that form. For example, if the text takes the form of a report and the author's purpose was to report on a group of objects, events or ideas, the text might include:

- an introduction
- a general classification of the group
- a series of paragraphs on the individual members of the group
- subheadings.

Resources

- A selection of texts suitable for the activity.

The guided teaching and learning sequence

1. Select a text that has clear headings and subheadings, a range of different print types and a variety of visual elements. If you wish to explore language structures, find texts that use some of the features described above.
2. Explain how text features can help the learners to gain an overview of the structure of the text and give clues to its content.
3. Give the learners a set time to survey the text, looking for useful information about its structure and layout.
4. Ask the learners to identify where in the text they might seek a specific kind of information.
5. The learners can work in pairs, sharing the information they find and discussing the text features that helped them.

Follow-up activity

The learners can take responsibility for selecting suitable texts for this activity.