General manual Newswise

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1. Introduction

1.1   *Newswise*

Newswise can be used next to a method of teaching English as a Modern Foreign Language. During *Newswise* reading time pupils read news related texts.

Linked to these texts are assignments, aimed at the pupils to actively process the text using reading strategies. Attention is also paid to vocabulary.

The *Newswise* approach is based on the successful programme *Nieuwsbegrip*[1]. The idea behind both programmes is that the use of current affairs creates a more functional context, more involvement and motivation from pupils to read these texts.

They also work on extending their vocabulary and knowledge of the world. These are two important conditions to understand learning content and textbook contents with other subjects.

Levels

Newswise is appropriate for pupils in upper primary (bilingual) education, secondary education and secondary vocational education and special needs education. For a good understanding of reading, pupils must have a reasonable level of vocabulary.

Newswise texts are written by a native speaker who writes three texts at levels A1, A2 and B1 level of the Common European Frame Work of Reference (CEF).

Together with these texts, assignments are developed to teach reading strategies. The target language used by *Newswise* is the official language, meaning that the exercises are also in English. Each *Newswise* teacher/user has access to data on both levels. The central topic and reading strategy are similar for both levels. This makes the use of different levels within a group relatively simple. Suggestions for level differentiation are made in par. 2.6.

Topic choice & availability of new teaching materials

The topic choice is based on suggestions made by *Newswise* schools. Schools can send in their requests via the *Newswise* website. The authors make a choice and then write texts and assignments on the selected topics using various A1, A2 and B1 level resources. Where possible the authors search for available and appropriate online clips for a suitable introduction and/or ending of a lesson.

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[1] www.nieuwsbegrip.nl. *Nieuwsbegrip i*s a method for reading comprehension for both primary and secondary education, special needs education and secondary vocational education, based on current affairs. The program exists since 2005 and is now used at about 6000 schools.

Methods in the classroom

In the classroom the texts are read using a reading scheme (The Step-by-Step Reading Guide). This scheme describes the complete process of (actively) reading a text, starting with the orientation of a text to summarising the contents of a text. The Step-by-Step reading Guide uses the five reading strategies of *Newswise.* The Step-by-Step Reading Guide can be downloaded from the website and must be printed and copied and possibly laminated for each pupil.

The lessons start with a plenary focus on the topic and the reading strategy. Then the teacher "models" and demonstrates the use of the strategy whilst reading a text out loud. After that the pupils are split into small groups to read and discuss the text together. This method is called 'reciprocal reading'. More information on this topic can be found in chapter 2.
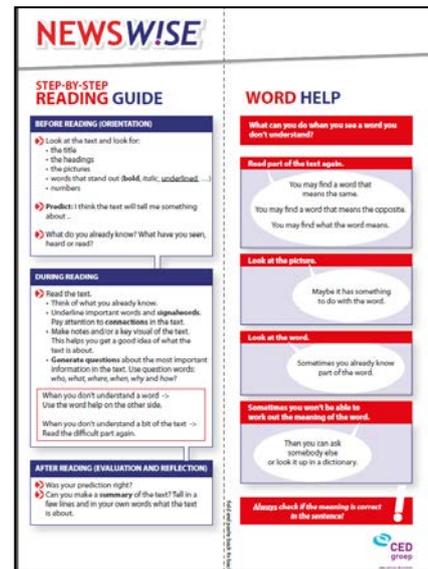
Lesson time

A lesson takes between 45 minutes to an hour. How much class time you spend on these items depends on what you want to cover in class or how much you want the pupils to do independently or as homework.

Modules

For each school year 19 modules are supplied via the *Newswise* website. Every two weeks a new lesson plan is posted on the website covering a period of 5 weeks. Each lesson plan covers a specific reading strategy.

Archive

News wise themes, based on current affairs, are always up to date and ready to use. This means that every theme is available as needed. Earlier themes will be still available and can be accessed via the 'Archive' button on the website. Here you can find additional teaching resources for remedial teaching or lesson extension. If you prefer not to work with the chosen topic you can use alternative lessons.

1.2 Getting Started with *Newswise*

To be able to work with *Newswise* you have to assess the starting level of the pupil, level A1, A2 or B1. This varies for each pupil. You can download and print the current lesson at the suitable level for the pupil(s) every fortnight. Always print a copy of the text for each individual pupil. Pupils can work together on the assignments within small groups or transcending classes. Sharing the responsibility for the copying of materials will save you time.

Collect and prepare general Newswise resources

Prior to working with *Newswise* you print one copy of the **Step-by-Step Reading Guide**. Then you copy it for each pupil on card paper and laminate it (if necessary). It is also recommended to make a poster of the **Step-by-Step Reading Guide** to use in your classroom. You can enlarge the **A4 Step-by-Step Reading Scheme**. It is advisable to ask the pupils to have a **binder** where they can put their work in.

2. Teaching reading comprehension: education and instruction

Reading comprehension is an important learning skill. Pupils must be able to read texts in a variety of learning situations and in different subjects and extract knowledge out of it. It is a complex skill that is connected to vocabulary, knowledge of the world and technical reading levels. A range of motivational texts at the right level is an important, but not the only condition for learning to understand texts. As is the acquisition of other complex skills like clear instructions, role-model behaviour, the opportunity to practice and receive positive feedback on the task are necessary to master the right reading skills. The role of the teacher is essential at this point.

To teach pupils good reading comprehension skills and to support them adequately with any problems, it is necessary that a teacher completely understands the process of obtaining reading comprehension skills and the various factors involved. In addition, you should also have knowledge of effective teaching and the variety in educational approaches. This chapter discusses both issues.

2.1 The process of reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process. Where on the one hand lower-order processes of reading play a part. Such as processes that have to deal with the decoding of words (technical reading). On the other hand most importantly are the higher order processes where integrating information from

the text to existing knowledge play a key role. A pupil will combine textual information and existing knowledge to a coherent mental representation. (Linguists call this a 'situation model').

When reading a text a pupil has to build a good mental idea of the text by constantly *making connections*: connections between information in the different parts of the text and between the text and his / her own knowledge. Due to these connections '*inferences*' can be made. Information that is relevant for understanding, but is not always

explicitly mentioned in the text is deducted and 'gaps' are filled based on prior knowledge. Pupils with a lot of prior and general knowledge of the topic, including the correct vocabulary, have an advantage over other pupils. Hence, there is the strong correlation between a person's vocabulary, background knowledge and reading comprehension.
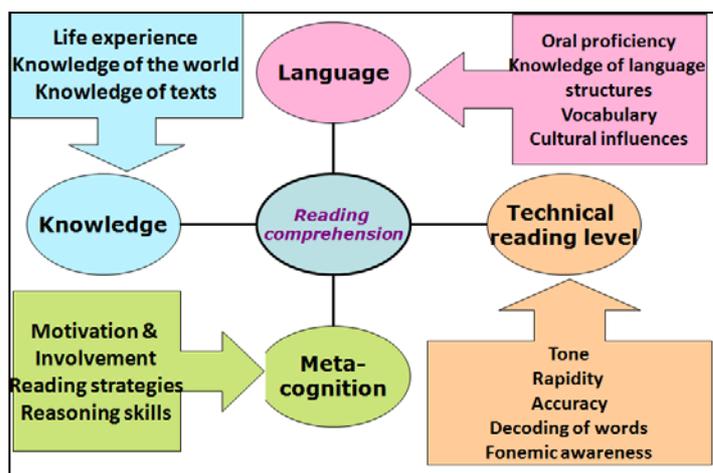
While reading the pupil has to 'monitor' the construction of the 'situation model' and constantly adjust this model, based on new information in the text and newly made connections. This requires awareness of and reflection on their own reading comprehension, an active reading attitude and the use of mega-cognitive skills and reading strategies. These mega-cognitive strategies for balancing the importance of information and dealing with unfamiliar words are also simply called 'reading strategies'.

Research shows that clear instruction and training in the use of mega-cognitive skills and reading strategies, together with a lot of reading and experience with different types of texts, leads to better reading comprehension. That is why, *Newswise* focuses on those two issues: teaching reading strategies and applying these strategies in new texts. Because the texts are about (semi) current topics, *Newswise* is also effective in extending the pupil's knowledge of the world and their vocabulary. The use of (semi) current topics is motivating to the pupils because they feel that the texts are relevant to them and they can use their prior knowledge.

2.2 Reading strategies & guide

There is a range of reading strategies, but *Newswise* focuses on five strategies that repeatedly emerge from research as important, the so-called evidence-based strategies. These five strategies are the key focal point of the weekly lessons. Below is a brief description of the five strategies.

Predict
The strategy 'Predict' is about the orientation of the text and activating prior knowledge. The pre-fetched knowledge can be used to acquire new information from the text. Because of prior knowledge pupils are more focused on new information in the text and on checking their existing ideas on the topic.

Clarify
While reading a text, comprehension problems may occur. Pupils can come across unfamiliar words or parts of a sentence or paragraph they do not understand. A characteristic of good readers is that they do not continue reading but try to clarify any ambiguities. This word deduction strategy means the pupil is able to find the meaning of words from the context. Checking their understanding of the text (monitoring) is also part of this strategy.

Summarise
The purpose of reading a text is to build up a clear image of the contents: working through a process, the main idea or the message of the author. Summarising helps the pupil to consciously reflect on the core information of a text. By rewording the text they will understand and remember the text better. This process also makes clear which parts they did or did not understand, so they can reread those parts. That is why it is important to summarise small parts of a text during reading.

Generating questions

Generating questions promotes active reading. Strategies like predicting, summarizing and clarifying ambiguities comes from posing questions: What is it about? Do I understand what it is about? What have I learned? The text itself often raises all kinds of questions. During reading an active reader keeps track of whether these questions are answered by the text. The process of self-questioning is obvious to advanced and active readers, while lesser readers seldom come up with these questions.

Making connections

Making connections is key to reading comprehension. With this strategy, pupils are encouraged to consciously reflect on the relationships between the information in different parts of the text and between the text and their own knowledge. In this strategy explicit attention is also given to the text structure and the so called 'signal words'. These words show pupils the importance of cause and effect in a text, purpose and meaning, enumerations, opposition and so on. Occasionally there is also attention for reference words: who or what is meant by *he*, *she*, *that*, *those* and so on.

2.2.1 Step-by-Step Reading Guide

The strategies for better reading comprehension are not separate skills or tricks that simply have to be mastered by the pupils but activities characterizing the process of an active reader. In a 'natural' reading situation the pupil will use different reading strategies as needed while reading a text. Together the various reading strategies are part of an active text approach. This approach is visible in the Step by Step Reading Guide of *Newswise*. Pupils can use this Step by Step Reading Guide to support them when reading texts (e.g. in the *Newswise* lesson and other English texts). All five reading strategies are reflected in this guide.

Before reading

During reading

After reading

Word help
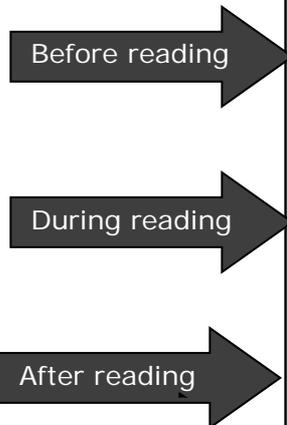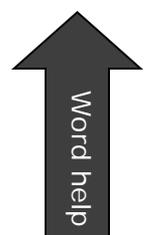
At '*Before Reading*' the text is introduced and the pupils focus on the text. They look at the appearance of the text (title, headings, pictures) and try to predict what the topic of the text may be. They also use prior knowledge about the topic (strategies 'predicting' and 'generating questions').

At '*During Reading*' pupils are asked to actively read the text. They search for essential information and important connections. Questions are posed and answered, while using their prior knowledge. The goal is to build a picture of the text structure using all different sorts of reading strategies. If they come across a difficult word or part of a text the pupil tries to 'clarify' what they already know about the text or word. Sometimes the **'Word help'** can be used, which contains some important deduction strategies.

During '*After Reading*' the pupils review the reading process. They check whether the ideas they previously had about the text and the topic are correct and reflect upon the meaning of the text as a whole (strategies 'predict' and 'summarise').

2.3   Modelling

"The essence of good strategy teaching is to make pupils understand what they need to do to become successful readers; model, show *how* skilled readers extract meaning to text by expressing their thoughts. This is quite different than *telling* them what to do." According to the American reading expert Elaine McEwan in her book 7 *strategies of Highly Effective Readers* (2004).

Demonstration as a teaching tool is called '*modelling'*. Modelling goes back to the master-apprentice principle. The master used to teach his trade to his apprentice by showing him what to do. The master carried out a certain skill and his apprentice then copied him step by step. The learning effect is reinforced by providing the sample operations with an explanation: "Look, I do this … That is necessary because … Mind you, it is important to …, or else this happens …"

However, there is a problem with modelling reading comprehension and other cognitive processes: the learning activity takes place mainly in the brain and is therefore not visible. A pupil who wants to become better at reading comprehension cannot simply observe an expert reader. The expert reader can, however, reveal this process by **reading while thinking aloud**. Modelling in reading comprehension is done by reading the text out loud and meanwhile expressing your thoughts on the text, making predictions, summarising a piece of text in your own words, and so on. Maybe you have been applying modelling already in other classes, for example, in analysing sentences during grammar lessons.

In *Newswise* lessons you use modelling to demonstrate the application of reading strategies. Generally, focus will be on the central reading strategy of that particular lesson.

The following focal points are important for the proper application of modelling:

• **Model one strategy at a time**

In a natural reading process strategies are used interchangeably. To make the characteristics and function of the individual strategies clear to the pupils, it is good to demonstrate them separately and give pupils the opportunity to practice certain aspects of the strategy. Therefore, only one strategy is central per lesson. During the year all strategies are discussed several times.

• **Do not model for long**

Give a short, clear demonstration to the pupils to show them exactly what it means to use this strategy. Read just one paragraph aloud while expressing your thoughts, for example the introduction of the text. (You can read only part of the paragraph when the text contains longer paragraphs). The attention span will drop if the demonstration is too long. Also it would be unclear to the pupils which activities are covered by the strategy and which are not. There must also be a moment for the pupils to apply the strategy themselves during class. >> see the section below.

• Try to link up with the **needs and prior knowledge level of the pupils**

It is important that the pupils can follow your thought and that they consider your example as something they can achieve as well. Think beforehand which words, concepts or context will be difficult for the pupils and which prior information can be linked to that during modelling.

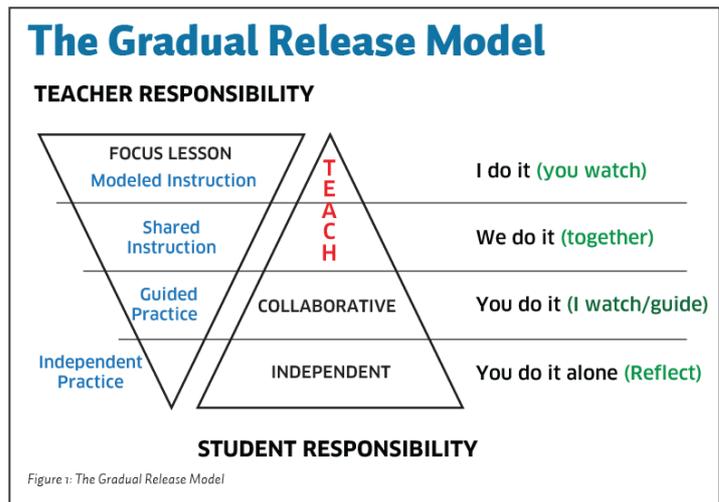• Model your **thinking activity / solution strategy**

Make clear that the pupils should not copy you exactly, but that they can apply your method to the next piece of text. Every so often try to model something you do not always understand immediately and say what you will do and why.

2.4 Reciprocal reading

The ultimate goal for pupils is learning to apply a good approach to reading and utilise reading strategies independently.
Therefore, it is important that they, not only 'receive' instruction and modelling, but also practice utilising the strategies themselves. At first this happens under supervision and with plenty of feedback, later with less need for support and more self-guidance.
A method in which this phased transition from (full) teacher-driven instruction to independent application has been developed for reading comprehension. It is known as 'reciprocal reading'.

The Gradual Release Model

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITY

FOCUS LESSON Modeled Instruction	T E A C H	I do it (you watch)
Shared Instruction		We do it (together)
Guided Practice	COLLABORATIVE	You do it (I watch/guide)
Independent Practice	INDEPENDENT	You do it alone (Reflect)

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

Figure 1: The Gradual Release Model

The diagram below shows the different stages or approaches to reciprocal reading.

Approach 1:	Approach 2:	Approach 3:	Approach 4:
Plenary	Plenary	Reading in small groups	Reading in small groups
Teacher is expert	Pupils are (also) expert	Groups of three with support	Groups of three independently

Diagram reciprocal reading

Explanation of the four approaches:

Approach 1: The teacher reads part of the text out loud while giving his/her thoughts and at the same time models the use of the central strategy or a particular phase of the Step by Step guide. The whole class watches and/or reads along.

Approach 2: One or more pupils read part of the text out loud while giving their thoughts, while the teacher and the rest of the class watches and/or reads along. The teacher gives feedback on the reading of the 'model pupils'.

Approach 3 and 4 often occur at the same time: all pupils work in small groups, but the pupils using approach four take turns reading part of the text or assignment out loud while sharing their ideas (modelling each other).

While using approach three the teacher joins a small group to help; he/she models another part of the text and assists pupils with reading or the assignment.

The various elements / approaches to reciprocal reading are all covered in the same lesson. It is not good to only model as a teacher for a certain period of time, then a moment where the pupils model with the whole group and then proceed on to group work. It is better to let pupils read parts of the text in groups from the beginning. The diagram below shows a lesson structure based on reciprocal reading. The different approaches are displayed in bold.

1. Start	• Plenary orientation on the topic of the text and the strategy of the week • Retrieve prior knowledge together • Possibly: note pupil's questions following the orientation phase • **Reading part of the text together + modeling the central strategy by teacher and / or pupils**
2. Processing (Handling)	• **The pupils read the rest of the text independently in groups of two or three.** • **Additional explanation is given by the teacher** • **The teacher walks around and gives feedback to the other groups, including the 'high level group'.**
3. Closure	• Brief classroom reflection on the lesson • Pay attention to text contents, reading process and collaboration. • Look back on questions that pupils had before: Were these questions answered? What did the pupils get out of the text / lesson?

3. *Newswise* lessons

3.1 Assignments

The lessons on all levels are constructed according to the same, but flexible pattern. Each lesson contains the same components, although the order of these components may vary.

Reading text with the Step-by-Step Reading Guide and Word Help
The class begins with the instruction on the central reading strategy. Part of the text is read together, where you, as a teacher, *model* the application of the strategy (show / carry out expressing thoughts) or have it done by one or more pupils.

If necessary, refer to the explanation block at the strategy assignment (see below) in advance and model the implementation of the tips given there.
After this, the pupils read the rest of the text in small groups of two, three or four pupils, where they help each other to implement the strategy during reading and to understand the text well.

Then the pupils start working on the assignments in their groups. Each lesson offers the following assignments:

- *Strategy Assignment*

Each lesson includes an assignment around the reading comprehension strategy of the week. In the pupil's book a short explanation block is always provided with each assignment, in which the function of the strategy is described, the application aspects that will be practiced in that particular lesson are explained and general application tips are given. Sometimes this task can be integrated with the reading of the text; after all, pupils should ultimately be able to apply the strategy while reading. Some issues, such as deriving the meaning of words or retrieving key connections through signal words however, are also practiced separately.

- *Focus on vocabulary*

Pupils will encounter unfamiliar words while reading the text. Using the word derivation strategies on Word Help (part of the Step by Step Reading Guide), they can try to figure out the meaning of these words. Word Help is often used explicitly when the 'Clarify' strategy is key. When necessary, pupils can use a short wordlist with some important words that appear in the text. At A1 level, this short list is printed in the exercises. At A2 level, this short list is added below the text and at level B1 it is printed in the teacher's manual. For this level you can determine yourself if it is necessary to provide the word list with the text. Do this especially if you expect the text to contain a lot of unfamiliar words. For example, for pupils with language disorders or pupils who just switched to a higher text reading level. However, the pupils themselves should always be on the lookout for unfamiliar words.

- *Key visual (key schedule)*

Making a schedule is a good way to visualise key information and important links in a text and getting a better grasp of the text. That is why each *Newswise* lesson contains a key visual, a partially filled in schedule that matches the text structure or the central concept.

KEY VISUAL

Top DJ's in the World	
What is the Top 100 DJ's list?	
Who are the poll winners?	
Where did the announcement take place?	
When did it take place?	
Why did people say the competition was unfair?	

An example of a key visual: a 5W chart

- *Additional assignment*

The last assignment of a Newswise lesson practices different language proficiencies following the topic of the text. The pupils listen to a song about the topic and fill in the gaps from the lyrics to practice their listening skills. They present an action plan to practice their speaking skills or they could practice the superlative to extend their vocabulary and grammar.

Lesson guide

Every week a concise guide comes with the current lesson. It provides an overview of the lesson and any (extra) preparations needed, such as materials for the additional assignment. Also included in the manual are the answers to the assignments. The manual needs to be downloaded separately.

3.2 Level differentiation

Newswise offers reading texts and assignments at three levels around the same topic. This makes it possible to work with multiple levels within a class or any other group formation. Each pupil reads at the level that suits his / her development.

However, it is not always necessary or desirable to use different text levels for differentiation. By varying the type of instruction and level of supervision the pupils with different reading levels will be able to work at their own level.

On the next page two examples are given of a lesson structure with level differentiation, one for working with two groups and one for working with three groups.

Lesson plan for level differentiation - Beginners (two level groups)

<--- Degree of guided instruction

Level I	Level II
Plenary instruction & instruction including modelling (thinking aloud) for all pupils	
Extended instruction for group I	**Work independently**
Work independently	**Feedback round**
Feedback round	**Work independently**
Plenary review and closure	

Complexity of the text --->

Lesson plan for level differentiation - Advanced (three level groups)

<--- Degree of guided instruction

Group I	Group II	Group III
Plenary instruction for groups I, II, III		
Instruction including modelling (thinking aloud) for groups I and II	**Work independently**	
Extended instruction	**Work independently**	
Work independently	**Feedback round**	**Feedback round**
Feedback	**Work independently**	**Work independently**
Work independently	**Feedback round**	**Feedback round**
Plenary review and closure		

Complexity of the text -->

The following method reflects these structures:

• You start with a brief introduction of the text to the whole group: together exploring the makeup of the text (title, headings, illustrations, any sources) and on the basis of that predicting the topic and any possible sub-topics. The text version used by the majority of the group should be taken as a reference.

• Briefly try to activate prior knowledge on the topic: what have pupils heard already about or read in recent days and weeks, or what is their general knowledge on the topic? Motivation for reading the text could be increased by having the pupils think about what they do not know yet. What questions do they have about the topic and might these questions be answered by the text?

• Finally you introduce the central reading strategy of the week as part of the introduction/instruction. Identify the use of the strategy (what's the point of using it and, how it helps to have a better understanding of the text) and / or read the explanation block that comes with the assignments together. Then read a small part of the text out loud - preferably, the introduction - while modeling the application of the strategy and the tips in the explanation block. Possibly have one or a few pupils model a part (= Approach 2 of reciprocal reading, see par. 2.4)
Now have the pupils continue reading the text in small groups and implementing the strategy assignment followed by the vocabulary and key schedule assignment.

• Form a small group of pupils that need additional instruction supporting them a little further with reading and starting up the processing task: 'model' even more comprehension as needed, have the pupils read the text aloud while expressing their thoughts, give them feedback, and set questions related to the assignments. Next, these pupils will start working independently and you can join the other groups for feedback and possible support.

Pupils who work on a higher text level could possibly start working independently (in small groups) during the orientation phase of the text. In that case you will have to identify the central strategy as the main focus of that particular lesson at an earlier stage so they will also be aware of where the main focus of that lesson lies.

These pupils do not participate in the exploration, prediction and modelling of the text with the whole group. When that is the case discuss the application of the strategy at the higher text level during the feedback round with this group. Ask the pupils to read out loud a few sentences while expressing their thoughts and give them feedback on their strategy implementation.

4. Final word

Would you like to follow the latest developments concerning *Newswise? C*hecking us up on www.newswise.eu and follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

Appendix 1: Literature

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Appendix 2:
Common European Frame work of Reference
Reading Level A2 and B1

Level A2

Mastery level

Can read very short, simple texts. Can find specific predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables. Can understand short simple personal letters.

Receptive text features	Strategies
• **topic** Everyday, familiar and concrete • **word use and sentence structure** High frequency words and familiar words from their own language or included in shared international vocabulary. Texts are structurally simple and clear • **text layout** The layout of the text provides visual support to understanding the of the text. • **text length** Short texts	• **recognise and interpret signals** Can use an idea of the overall meaning of short texts and utterances on everyday topics of a concrete type to derive the probable meaning of unknown words from the context.

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3. Reading for information

Can understand specific information in simple texts.

For Example: product information on labels of foods or medications (DL)

vacancy for a holiday job or work placement (DL, OPL)

a message on a notice board where someone asks or announces something

(DL)

information on a website about a camp site or hotel (DL)

Can understand the main points in simple texts in magazines, newspapers and on a website.

For Example: about a hobby or leisure activity (DL)

about fashion and body care (DL)

an interview with a pop idol in a youth magazine ('graded reader') (OPL)

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short articles about current affairs - sport, world politics - in a local newspaper (DL)

Can understand short, descriptive texts on familiar matters

For Example: a short report from a meeting or event (XX)

a program for an excursion or a Summer course (DL, WE, OPL)

a personal description on a website for correspondence contacts (DL, OPL)

a company description in a brochure (OPL, WE)

captions at an exhibition or presentation (PU, OPL, WE)

Level B1

Mastery level

Can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequent everyday or job related language. Can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.

Receptive text features	Strategies
• **topic** Familiar, everyday or work related topics • **word use and sentence structure** Simple and everyday • **text layout** Text layout is well structured • **text length** Texts can be longer.	• **recognise and interpret signals** Can identify unfamiliar words from the context on topics related to his/her field and interests. Can extrapolate the meaning of occasional unknown words from the context and deduce sentence meaning, provided the topic discussed is familiar.

3. Reading for information

Can understand important factual information in short reports and articles.

For example: simple information from governments or education institutions (PU, OPL)

the 'who-what-where' in newspaper articles about a hold-up, an accident, a disturbance (DL)

extract information about products, materials, appliances from technical reports related to their own field (OPL, WE)

explanatory text in tables, charts and diagrams (OPL, WE)

Biographical information about an artist, writer, sportsman/woman in a magazine or on a website ((DL, OPL)

report of a staff meeting or project meeting at work (OPL, WE)

the subtitles of a television programm, video/DVD or film (DL)

sportsresults on teletext (DL)

background information hand-outs received during a presentation at a trade fair (WE)

Can understand key issues and important arguments in simple texts in magazines, newspapers or the Internet.

For example: article in a popular newspaper about hobby or sport (DL)

article in a music magazine about an upcoming new rock band (DL)

articles about topics related to their own interests in popular science related magazines for teenagers (DL, OPL)

article in a youth magazine about safe sex (DL, OPL)

websites about travel or education abroad (DL, OPL)

Source: Liemberg, E. & Meijer, D. (2004) *Taalprofielen*. National Bureau Modern Foreign Language