

# Making CONNECTIONS

**MAKING CONNECTIONS 3** is a high intermediate academic reading and vocabulary skills book. It is intended for students who need to improve their strategic reading skills and build their academic vocabulary.

## SKILLS AND STRATEGIES 7

### Identifying the Thesis of a Reading

In Skills and Strategies 1, you learned that each paragraph has one main idea, which consists of the topic and the writer's claim about the topic. Like paragraphs, a whole reading (an academic text, article, essay, etc.) usually has one *central* main idea – the thesis. Usually writers clearly state the thesis at the end of the introductory paragraph or paragraphs of a reading, and the main ideas of all of the paragraphs in the reading generally contribute to the thesis. It may be repeated in a new way in the final paragraph. In addition, each paragraph has a function and a specific relationship to the thesis. Understanding the thesis of a reading is an important academic skill.

#### Examples & Explanations

These are the main ideas from the six paragraphs of a whole reading:

- ① With 1.5 billion speakers, English is now a global language, but the numbers are not the most important issue.
- ② Languages become global when they gain official status in many countries.
- ③ Languages become global when they gain favored foreign-language status in many countries.
- ④ English is an official language in many countries that have no native speakers of English, and it is the most widely studied language in the world.
- ⑤ A large number of native speakers does not necessarily cause a language to become global.
- ⑥ The economic, military, and political power of the nations promotes their languages to global status.

The **topic** that connects the main ideas of all of these paragraphs is *global languages*. As you read, you should form a hypothesis about the writer's thesis: What does the writer want to say about global languages?

The main idea of paragraph 1 introduces the **thesis** with the topic and a **claim**, with English as an example.

The main ideas of paragraphs 2 and 3 are the ways in which a language may reach global status.

The main idea of paragraph 4 is that English is an example of the claims made in paragraphs 2 and 3.

The main idea of paragraph 5 is the common view: a factor that readers might think is important but the author claims is not.

Paragraph 6 provides the most fundamental reason for the global status of a language.

Together, the paragraphs support the writer's primary **claim**: *A language attains global status, not because of the number of its speakers, but because of the power of the nations in which its native speakers live.*

The main idea in paragraph 6 restates the central main idea – the thesis – that the writer wants to express in this reading.

Each unit begins with an in-depth study of key skills and strategies for reading academic texts, helping students to learn how and when to use them.

#### Strategies

These strategies will help you identify the thesis of a whole reading.

- As you begin to read, ask yourself: *What is the topic?* The title often can help you decide.
- What claim do you think the writer will make about that topic? In other words, what do you think the thesis will be?
- Think about the main ideas of each paragraph that you read. Are they all related to this topic and the thesis?
- Pay attention to the first, second, and last paragraphs in the reading. Writers often state or restate the thesis of the reading in one of these places.

#### Skill Practice 1

Read the following lists of main ideas of each paragraph of a reading. Highlight the topic of the reading for each list. Then read the four possible claims below. Circle the claim you think best expresses the thesis of the reading.

1

##### Language and Machines

- ① Machine translation uses software to translate sentences from one language to another.
- ② Machine translation has a long history.
- ③ Early machine translation programs translated word for word.
- ④ Word-for-word translations are not satisfactory because they do not produce very natural texts.
- ⑤ New methods of machine translation are different because they rely on huge databases of real language samples.
- ⑥ Machine translation has improved a lot in the last few decades.
- ⑦ Humans often still have to clean up machine-translated texts.
  - a The crucial difference between machine translation of the past and machine translation today is the use of massive databases.
  - b There have been tremendous improvements in machine translation in recent years.
  - c Machine translation has improved a lot, but it still usually requires human involvement.
  - d It is still better to use human translators than machine translators because machines cannot really understand language.

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##### Signed Languages

- ① Signed languages use facial expressions, as well as hand and body positions and movements, rather than sounds to express meaning.
- ② Signed languages are equivalent to spoken languages in their ability to express a wide range of meaning.
- ③ Signed languages have their own grammars.

Students learn strategies for approaching academic texts and skills for consciously applying the strategies.

## WHAT'S NEW

- Critical thinking skills
- More recycling of skills and strategies
- Study of the Academic Word List
- Updated readings
- Enhanced unit navigation

### Before You Read

#### Connecting to the Topic

Discuss the following questions with a partner.

- 1 Do you think babies can understand language before they can speak? Why or why not?
- 2 At what age do you think language learning begins?
- 3 Think about how you began to learn your second language. Do you think babies begin the process in the same way? Explain your answer.
- 4 How do people become bilingual (able to speak two languages well)?

#### Previewing and Predicting

Reading the title and first sentence of each paragraph is a quick way to predict what a reading will be about.

**A** Read the title and the first sentence of each paragraph in Reading 1. What do you think this reading will be about? Put a check (✓) next to the topic or topics that you think will be included in the reading.

- ☐ A Research methods in the study of child language learning
- ☐ B A baby's first sentences
- ☐ C Bilingual education
- ☐ D Early bilingual language learning
- ☐ E Language learning before birth
- ☐ F How infants begin to understand the sounds of language

**B** Compare your answers with a partner's.

#### While You Read

As you read, stop at the end of each sentence that contains words in **bold**. Then follow the instructions in the box in the margin.

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Each unit contains 5 readings, providing students with multiple opportunities to practice applying the skills and strategies.

Students learn how to use the skills and strategies by applying them to each text while they read it.

Predicting the content of a text is critical for reading college books, and students practice this skill extensively before beginning each reading.

### READING 1

## When Does Language Learning Begin?

<sup>1</sup> By the time children have reached the age of about five, they have accomplished something that few of us give much thought to but is actually quite extraordinary: They have learned how to speak their native language. They have perfect pronunciation, and they have learned most of the grammar necessary to speak and understand their language. Language acquisition takes place regardless of whether the children are born into educated, prosperous families in a society that uses advanced technology or into uneducated, even illiterate, poor families in a developing country. It occurs regardless of the disparities in individual children's intellectual abilities or their motivation. It also begins far earlier than scientists once thought.

<sup>2</sup> This remarkable achievement, which takes place without formal teaching, has fascinated scientists for centuries. Once children begin to verbalize, with words or simply with sounds, scientists can study the language acquisition process fairly easily. However, the more mysterious part of the process takes place before that time, when a baby begins to perceive the sounds of language and understand their connection to meaning. How do babies begin this language acquisition process?

<sup>3</sup> Recent research indicates that this process begins before babies are even born. From inside the uterus, fetuses cannot hear individual sounds, but they can perceive the rhythm patterns and tones of the language that they hear. Once they are born, babies use this fetal auditory experience to accomplish three crucial tasks. First, they recognize their mother's voice; second, they distinguish between language sounds and non-language sounds; and third, they differentiate between basic contours of their own language – the rhythm and tone patterns – and those of other languages. They can do all of these things within days of birth.

#### WHILE YOU READ 1

- What do you think the topic of this reading is?
- a) How babies learn language
  - b) The earliest stages of language learning
  - c) The most important factors in language learning



Children recognize their mothers' voices very early.

READING 1 • 131

FROM THE SERIES AUTHORS

“Reading is an interactive process, in which readers use their knowledge of language, text organization, and the world to understand what they read.”

“Reading is goal-oriented and strategic; good academic readers know when to use the right reading skills.”

Students continually review the skills and strategies, helping them build up a valuable set of tools for reading academic texts.

- 6 Why do some scientists prefer the term *sensitive period* rather than *critical period*?
- a They are not really sure if the *critical period* applies to everyone.
  - b People are especially sensitive to any exposure to a second language when they are children.
  - c The loss of language learning ability is gradual rather than sudden.
  - d Animals as well as human beings share this important developmental period.

Skill Review

In Skills and Strategies 7, you learned that most readings have a central thesis that the writer wants to express. Identifying the thesis of a reading is an important academic skill.

Review Reading 2, and then answer the questions below.

- 1 What is the topic of the reading?
- 2 What claim is the writer making about this topic?
- 3 Is there a sentence that contains the thesis? If so highlight it.

With a partner, match the function of each paragraph in the right hand column with the correct paragraph. Write the paragraph number in the left hand column.

PARAGRAPH NUMBER	FUNCTION OF PARAGRAPH
	Shows more specific application to second language
	Provides scientific explanation for thesis
	Shows broad application of thesis
	Presents thesis
	Discusses importance of main idea for teaching
	Provides evidence for thesis
	Shows specific application to language learning

Vocabulary Development

Definitions

Find the words in Reading 2 that are similar to the definitions below.

- 1 opposing (adj) Par. 1
- 2 argument (n) Par. 1
- 3 to be (v) Par. 1
- 4 some (adj) Par. 1
- 5 most (adj) Par. 1
- 6 to re (v) Par. 1
- 7 to go (v) Par. 1
- 8 to re (v) Par. 1
- 9 some (adj) Par. 1
- 10 relate (v) Par. 1
- 11 a gro (n) Par. 1
- 12 comp (n) Par. 1
- 13 wild (adj) Par. 1
- 14 to tre (v) Par. 1
- 15 exact (adj) Par. 1

who work hard but have average abilities. They admit, however, that this is simply a generalization and that it is always possible to find \_\_\_\_\_ to this general \_\_\_\_\_.

Academic Word List

The following are Academic Word List words from Readings 1 and 2 of this unit. Use these words to complete the sentences. (For more on the Academic Word List, see page 256.)

acquisition (n)	attain (v)	distinctions (n)	fundamental (adj)	utilize (v)
approximate (v)	conflicting (adj)	exposure (n)	perceive (v)	visual (adj)

- 1 She listened to the teacher and tried to \_\_\_\_\_ his pronunciation.
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ information is processed in both hemispheres of the brain.
- 3 There are \_\_\_\_\_ arguments about the best way to learn an additional language.
- 4 It is a common belief that language \_\_\_\_\_ becomes easier with the third and fourth language, but scientists are not sure that this is true.
- 5 Research has demonstrated that it is easier to \_\_\_\_\_ sounds in women's speech than in men's speech.
- 6 Language learning scholars \_\_\_\_\_ advanced technology in their research.
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_ to print material in the home, such as books and newspapers, is an important predictor of a child's reading performance.
- 8 Some people with extraordinary abilities can \_\_\_\_\_ a high level of proficiency in a new language after a very short period of study.
- 9 Speakers of English have difficulty hearing the \_\_\_\_\_ between tones in languages such as Chinese and Vietnamese.
- 10 Reading is a skill that is \_\_\_\_\_ to success in modern life.

Students expand their vocabularies by studying key words from each reading and academic words from each unit.

Words in Context

attain counter

- 1 U.S. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Edu \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 perform \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 people \_\_\_\_\_

## THE APPROACH

The *Making Connections* series offers a skills-based approach to academic reading instruction. Throughout each book, students are introduced to a variety of academic reading and vocabulary-building skills, which they then apply to high-interest, thematically-related readings.

### Beyond the Reading

#### Critical Thinking

Reading 4 discusses language death, which decreases language diversity around the world.

**A** Read the following two arguments about language diversity and language death. Which one do you agree with and why?

- 1 Linguistic and cultural diversity are an important source of knowledge. When languages and cultures die, we often lose knowledge of these cultures as well as knowledge about the natural world. We should not allow languages to die.
- 2 People make intelligent choices about the language they want to speak. Languages have emerged and died throughout history. We should not interfere with this natural process. We should not force people to learn endangered languages.

**B** Find a partner who has the opposite opinion, and discuss your reasons for your opinions.

#### Research

Research a dying language. Find answers to the following questions.

- What is the history of this language?
- Are there many native speakers left? About how many?
- Are any children learning the language?
- Have there been any efforts to save the language? Explain your answer.

#### Writing

Write two paragraphs about your research. The first paragraph will describe the history of the language, and the second will describe its current status and efforts to save it.

#### EXPLORING OPINIONS

Critical readers form their own opinions about important topics in a text.

Each unit develops students' higher level thinking skills, such as exploring opinions and synthesizing information.

Students also learn to read more quickly, a valuable skill for extended academic texts.

#### Improving Your Reading Speed

Good readers read quickly and still understand most of what they read.

- A** Read the instructions and strategies for Improving Your Reading Speed in Appendix 3 on page 273.
- B** Choose either Reading 3 or Reading 4 in this unit. Read it without stopping. Time how long it takes you to finish the text in minutes and seconds. Enter the time in the chart on page 274. Then calculate your reading speed in number of words per minute.

READING 4 •

The units end with a study of how writers make connections across sentences, helping students learn how to navigate dense academic text.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

#### Exercise 1

Writers may connect ideas between sentences in many different ways. The second sentence may:

- a describe a **result** of what is reported in the first sentence
- b provide a **contrast** to what is described in the first sentence
- c add a **detail** or details to support the more general information in the first sentence

How does the second sentence in each pair of sentences below connect to the first sentence? Write *a*, *b*, or *c* on the line depending on whether it is a result, a contrast, or a detail.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 Early critical period studies of language acquisition contained a number of flaws in their research design and methods. Later studies avoided some of these fundamental weaknesses by using real language samples and powerful statistical analysis.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2 Researchers analyzed overgeneralization errors that children make, such as "I ate everything," and "My mommy brang me a cookie," which have been documented extensively in the child language literature. This helped them to understand some of the most basic principles of language acquisition.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3 We can define linguistic competence, or knowledge, as the ability of the native speaker to comprehend and produce novel utterances. One of the components is phonological competence, that is, knowledge of the sounds of the language and the rules for combining those sounds in appropriate ways.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4 As children, we all attain a uniform level of competence in our first language, apparently with little effort, just by interacting with native speakers in our environment. For most adults, however, learning a second language seems to be a fundamentally different process, which involves considerable effort and produces widely varying outcomes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5 When immigrants come to a new country, it is usually their children that acquire the language of the host country most rapidly. Because their knowledge of the new language is superior to their parents, the children often have to translate for them at stores, hospitals, and government offices.

#### Exercise 2

Make a clear paragraph by putting sentences A, B, and C into the best order after the numbered sentence. Write the letters in the correct order on the blank lines.

- 1 Bilingualism has clear practical advantages, but recent research indicates that it also has significant cognitive benefits. \_\_\_\_\_

**A** They also found that learning and maintaining a second language can delay some of the effects of aging on the brain.

**B** Since that time, researchers have shown that bilinguals are often better at focusing their attention and performing complex tasks.

**C** This view is in contrast to the perspective of 50 years ago, which characterized bilingualism as a barrier to cognitive development and academic progress.

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