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Reading techniques and strategies (M8–10)

Overview

Reading competence is a key qualification of existential importance in today's information societies. This competence can and must, of course, be furthered in HLT as well, especially since the pertinent techniques are not tied to one particular language. A wealth of information can be found in volume 2 of the present series (Didactic suggestions for promoting reading in the first language). We are therefore limiting ourselves to three kinds of materials pertaining to the 5-step reading technique, i. e., notes, marginal notes and summaries. They support the students primarily in their independent work with more challenging texts (subject texts, literary texts), which must be understood, e. g., in preparation for a test or a presentation.

Recommendations for implementation

M8

M8 (Understanding the precise meaning of a text with the 5-step technique): it is useful to first discuss with the class the different ways of reading. (People read for entertainment, to obtain specific information, to get a rough overview of a topic, or to gain an exact understanding in order to be able to explain and reproduce it). The last point is important for texts and presentations, and the 5-step technique has proven highly successful in this regard. The five steps must be discussed and explained in class; most importantly, they must be (repeatedly) practiced and reviewed with the help of a specific text. This can be an HLT subject text, or individual texts which the students read in preparation for their presentations. The important thing is to discuss the experiences with the 5-step technique and to stress its value also for the mainstream education classes. Moreover, when discussing step 1, it should be related to M6 (finding your way around in books), and with step 4b, also reference M9 and M10 (notes, summaries). These three worksheets should have been addressed with the students previously or they should at least be implemented at this time.

M9 and M10

M9 (Highlighting essential information in texts; taking notes) and M10 (Creating good summaries) could either be introduced individually or they can be explained and implemented in conjunction with M8 (5-step technique). M9 explains the specifics of step 4b (Highlighting essential information, taking marginal notes), M10 (summaries) specifically deals with step 4c.

It is absolutely imperative that both worksheets be explained in HLT and that the training include practical applications with concrete assignment tasks. If the sheets are simply distributed, the risk of the students' not implementing and applying the described learning techniques is very high. For the techniques 9.1 and 9.2 (marking, marginal notes) the specifics of the technique are best elucidated with a factual text or a story. The same holds true for the three techniques described in M10, which are very useful in the preparation of presentations as well.