

Curriculum Design of an EAP Reading Course for Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

The following article provides a description of the curriculum design of an EAP reading course for nursing students, developed following Nation and Macalister's (2010) model of the curriculum design process. This article will deal with the *contents and sequencing*, *format and presentation*, and *monitoring and assessment* segments of that model. An overview of the principles underpinning decisions concerning the three parts mentioned will also be provided, so that the reader has an idea about the beliefs that modelled this teacher's decisions.

Keywords: EAP, reading comprehension, intensive reading, extensive reading, fluency development, vocabulary

Introduction

This course has been designed to be implemented in the third year of a Nursing course of studies, over a yearly instructional period, at Universidad Nacional del Comahue. It is an EAP reading course developed following Nation and Macalister's (2010) model of the curriculum design process. Figure 1 represents the parts of such model in graphical form.

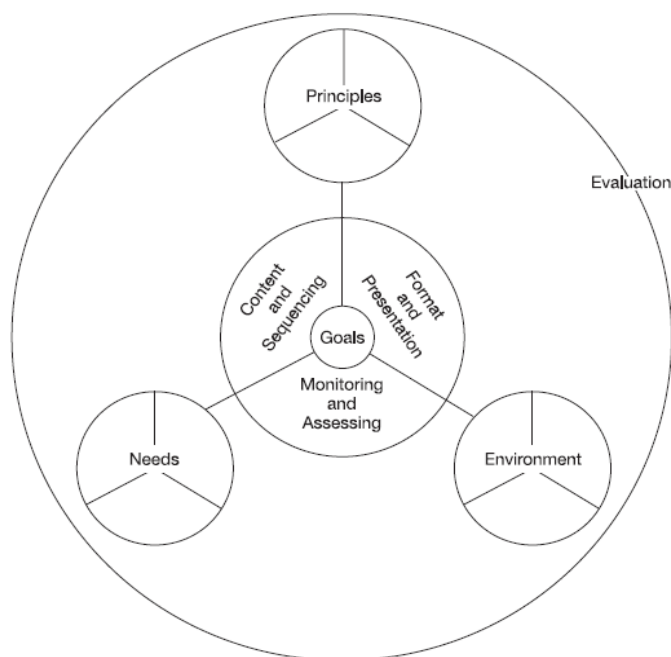


Fig. 1: Parts of the curriculum design process, according to Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 3)

Environment and Needs Analysis

The first stage in designing a language curriculum, according to Nation and Macalister (2010) involves assessing the environment where the course will take place, especially looking at those factors that can affect decisions about the goals of the course, what to include in it, and how to teach and assess it.

Students who take this course are advanced nursing students, who have already been introduced and are familiar with the basic concepts of their field of study. The subject *English* is placed on the third year of *Licenciatura en Enfermería*, and, as a requirement for taking this course, it is obligatory for students to have passed two subjects: Foundations of Nursing and Gerontological Nursing. This will be taken into account when selecting the topic of texts to

work with, so that background knowledge can serve as an aid in the understanding of the text.

Surveys conducted years before have revealed that most of the students have not been in touch with the foreign language in a context other than that of secondary school and are therefore considered false beginners.

Attitudes towards the foreign language range from fear of not being able to understand the contents of the course to an understanding of the importance of mastering the foreign language for their future professional needs. This calls for relevant, motivating and appropriately leveled activities. Some of the surveyed students' opinions are transcribed below:

Se me dificulta un poco el inglés, me parece muy complicado¹.

Mi expectativa es que esta materia me ayude en el desempeño profesional².

Espero que la materia me ayude a incorporar nueva terminología de la lengua inglesa relacionada con la carrera de Enfermería³.

Students' expectations about the course reveal that they expect to learn how to read, understand and translate texts from their specialty:

Mis expectativas son aprender a ser lo más eficiente posible en la lectura y comprensión de los textos⁴.

Mis expectativas son lograr aprender a leer textos y adquirir más conocimientos⁵

Mis expectativas son poder aprender a traducir los textos y comprender de qué tratan⁶.

Information about the intended recipients' needs was gathered through surveys, the dialogue with students and faculty members, analysis of the General Core Curriculum for the Nursing Course of Studies and by considering the target situation in which students will need to use the language, i.e. thesis writing and professional development.

The Current Core Curriculum for *Licenciatura en Enfermería* describes a healthcare professional who provides high-quality care to the community through scientific knowledge, and who also guides nursing tasks and knowledge, promoting research to enhance nurses' role in the healthcare system.

Within this professional training framework, the teaching of English is understood, mainly, as the opportunity for students and future professionals to gain access to a corpus of scientific knowledge to be consulted both during the course of studies and their professional careers. Being able to read academic texts in English will broaden the range of authors and literature students can refer to during thesis work, but also during their professional training and after earning the Nursing degree, in the exercise of their profession.

Contents and sequencing

Contents and their sequencing take account of the environment in which the course will take place, learners' needs, and teaching and learning principles.

Units of progression

The course will include the following units of progression: vocabulary, grammar and reading skills and strategies, which need to be organized following criteria of frequency and complexity; and topics, text types and strategies, which can be presented in any order.

See Appendix 1 for a syllabus containing a list of items to cover in this course, graded and ordered following principles outlined under each unit's section. A graphic representation of

¹ I find English very difficult.

² I expect this subject to help me with my professional performance.

³ I expect that this subject helps me incorporate nursing terminology.

⁴ I expect to learn to be as efficient as possible in reading and understanding texts.

⁵ I expect to learn how to read texts and gain more knowledge.

⁶ I expect to learn to translate texts and to understand what they are about.

the syllabus is also provided illustrating how items will be covered following a spiral model (Bruner, 1962, cited in Nation & Macalister, 2010).

Topics

Text topics will be chosen to help learning within the classroom and to make learning meaningful outside the classroom, considering learners' interests and previous knowledge, in the belief that "a good language course not only develops the learners' control of the language but also puts the learners in contact with ideas that help the learning of language and are useful to the learners" (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p. 78).

It is believed that reading about topics that are familiar to students will allow them to give full attention to language items. When we speak about previous knowledge we refer to the body of information, concepts or ideas that the learner brings with himself to class and which includes knowledge of the world, specific academic knowledge, knowledge about the first language, and knowledge about the target language, as well.

Students who take this course are familiar with the basic concepts of their field of study, as well as the general characteristics of academic texts in their own language, so when meeting texts written in English they will be encouraged to activate that background knowledge, or *content schemata* (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988), so that it can aid them in the understanding of the text.

Text Types

Since one of the main goals of the course is to familiarize students with academic texts, the main source of reading throughout the course will involve what Biber (1989) calls *scientific expositions* (including mainly academic prose and official documents) and *learned expositions* (including academic prose, official documents, popular lore and biographies).

The first texts to be read in this course will be fragments from nursing textbooks, in an attempt to help learners start building knowledge about lexico-grammatical patterns and the rhetorical structure of texts from their field of study. According to Love (1993, cited in Hirvela, 2012), "the introductory textbooks within a particular academic discipline will exhibit both a schematic structure and a set of lexico-grammatical patterns which reflect and, to a certain extent, construct the epistemology of the discipline" (p. 216-217), helping students build the schema they need in order to proceed to more sophisticated reading in that discipline.

Text complexity will increase gradually, both in terms of linguistic structure and ideas developed, and in a second moment of the course the focus will be on research articles, which, according to Hyland (1999, cited in Hirvela, 2012) are more appropriate for students to explore the full range of conventions within which the socio-cultural system of the discipline is encoded.

Vocabulary

Surveys conducted at the end of previous courses revealed that lack of enough vocabulary is considered by many students the main obstacle for understanding a text:

Q: ¿Qué tipo de dificultades te surgen cuando lees un texto en inglés?⁷

A₁: No entender vocabulario, frases verbales u oraciones complejas⁸.

A₂: El significado de las palabras cuando cambiaban su terminación⁹.

A₃: Pierdo tiempo en buscar terminología [sic]¹⁰.

Taking into account students' perception, building a large receptive vocabulary is one of the most important aims of this course (See course goals in Appendix 1).

⁷ What kind of difficulties do you encounter when reading a text in English?

⁸ Failing to understand the vocabulary, verb phrases or complex sentences.

⁹ The meaning of words when their endings changed

¹⁰ I waste time looking up words.

Using frequency data derived from corpus-based studies helps us bring classroom English closer to actual English, providing more realistic examples of language usage (McEnery & Xiao, 2011; Gavioli, 2005). Corpus analysis provides us with empirical evidence to support our decisions about what to focus on in a course, what to leave out and how to sequence those contents.

Nation (1990, 2001) stresses the importance of focusing students' attention on high-frequency items, as they account for a high percentage of the running words in most text and occur repeatedly. West's (1953) *General Service List* will be used as a reference, both for selecting high frequency vocabulary to focus on and to select or adapt texts that cover such vocabulary. Nation (2001) claims that the first 1,000 headwords of this list cover 77% of the words in most texts, so considerable amounts of time should be spent on them, in the form of direct teaching, direct learning, incidental learning, and planned meetings with the words. By bringing students' attention to this carefully thought-out set of language items, we make sure that they "get the best return for their learning effort" (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p.40). Like Nation puts it, "any time spent learning them will be well repaid because they cover a lot of text and will be met often" (1990, p. 14).

A word of caution should be given about using only corpus data to decide on the language to be included in the course. In fact, like some authors recommend (Kennedy, 1998, Renouf, 1987, in MacEnery & Xiao, 2011), frequency data obtained from corpus study should be adjusted before being incorporated in the syllabus, following other criteria. In this case, one such criterion could be L1-L2 similarity, both in terms of form and meaning. It is believed that reconsidering high-frequency items in terms of their transparency could render a more accessible set of vocabulary items, especially at the beginning of the course.

Since an important goal of the course is to get students to be able to read academic texts from their specialty, academic and specialized words will also deserve attention in class. Coxhead's (2000) *Academic Word List*, which contains 570 word families that occur frequently over a wide range of academic texts, will be used for the selection of academic words. The percentage of technical vocabulary in academic texts tends not to be so high in nursing, but they will also be a part of the program.

Activities will be presented to help students enlarge their receptive vocabulary through repeated exposure to the most frequent words in context, a necessary condition for the acquisition of the different aspects of word knowledge (Schmitt, 2000).

Cognates will be presented as a way of easing students into the process of understanding texts, making those rich in these words the preferred ones, especially at the beginning of the course, because they allow students to make progress in a short time, boosting their motivation. There is evidence showing that forms in one language evoke the corresponding related forms in the other language (Nation, 1990), thus the principle to bear in mind would be: "the more predictable and regular the features of the word, the lighter the learning burden" (Nation, 1990, p. 35). Teachers can reduce such burden by raising learners' awareness about regular patterns in the spelling of English words, showing learners those grammatical patterns of words where English usage parallels Spanish usage or known patterns in English, among other possibilities.

It should be stressed that, given the reduced amount of time devoted to the course (3 hours a week, 90 hours altogether), training students in the use of strategies for the discovery of a new word's meaning and for consolidating a known word will be the most effective way of making sure that students gain autonomy in the management of vocabulary. Besides, opportunities need to be created for students to be exposed to large amounts of written texts, so that frequent vocabulary is encountered repeatedly and in this course this will be achieved by means of an extensive reading program.

Grammar

The grammar constructions listed in the syllabus (see Appendix 1) were selected using frequency data as a criterion, along the same lines of vocabulary choice. Again, given the intensive nature of this course, it was considered worthwhile to guide students in the understanding of the most common grammatical structures of academic prose. The *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber *et al.*, 1999) was used as a source of reference for the choice of grammatical items, as it provides a frequency-based comprehensive linguistic description of academic prose.

Although frequency will be one of the criteria taken into account, it has to be noted that the grammatical items chosen to be addressed in each unit will be derived from the texts that will serve as input to explore the academic nursing discourse, grouped around common topics. Bearing in mind that the main goal of the course is to guide students in tackling academic texts from their specialty, these texts will provide the context for the other components of the syllabus to be handled, focusing on those that may cause L2 readers to struggle with a text or misunderstand the intended meaning. Progress through the course means, in this case, increasing coverage of text types, vocabulary items, grammar structures, and reading skills and strategies, with plenty of opportunities of repetition at increasing levels of difficulty.

It is generally agreed that the contents of an ESP course should be graded in a way that makes them learnable for students. This implies that new structures should be built up on known structures and that simpler structures should come earlier in the course than more complex ones (Pienemann, 1985). However, it is not always evident how these contents should be graded and the only possibility left has traditionally been to rely on the teacher's intuitions (Pienemann, 1985).

The grammatical structures chosen to be included in the syllabus of this course were ordered trying to follow the predictions of acquisition developed in Pienemann's *Processability Theory* (1998) (PT), a theory of L2 grammar acquisition which predicts the order in which L2 learners learn to process different morphosyntactic phenomena.

Pienemann observed that L2 learners follow a fixed sequence of acquisition of L2 grammatical structures, which cannot be altered, even by means of instruction, because at each stage the necessary prerequisites for later stages are developed (Pienemann, 1985). However, the author claims, provided that the learner is at the correct stage of development, instruction can increase speed of development and rate of application of rules (Pienemann, 1985).

Processability theory predicts a hierarchy of processing resources, which develops over time. Briefly, the predicted sequence of acquisition is lexical before phrasal before inter-phrasal morphemes (Pienemann, 2011).

It should be noted, though, that the scope of PT is limited to productive grammar acquisition. To date, little attention has been paid to developmental stages of receptive grammar knowledge (Buyl & Housen, 2015), which would provide the most appropriate data for the present course.

Buyl & Housen (2015) carried out research to look at developmental stages in receptive grammar acquisition, within the framework of Pienemann's *PT*. Although further evidence is perhaps needed, their study seems to claim, at least tentatively, that receptive and productive grammar acquisition involve the same developmental stages as the ones outlined by PT.

I would like to conclude this section by mentioning that even when the aim is not for this to be a grammar course, it is believed that a brief introduction to some of the most difficult constructions found in texts will help readers become aware of how syntax conveys information and can help (or hinder) text understanding, a stance clearly made by Hedgcock and Ferris (2009).

Reading Skills and Strategies

Day and Park's (2005) taxonomy of types of comprehension was used as a guide to decide on the subskills to be developed in this reading course. *Word attack skills* and *text attack skills* (Nuttall, 1996) will also be promoted during the course.

Day and Park's (2005) six types of comprehension to be taken into account are:

- *Literal comprehension* refers to an understanding of the straightforward meaning of the text, which can be retrieved directly and explicitly from the text.
- *Reorganization* requires students to use information from various parts of the text and combine them for additional understanding. These questions require students to examine the text in its entirety, moving away from a sentence-by-sentence consideration of the text.
- *Inference* involves students combining their literal understanding of the text with their own knowledge and intuitions. Response is based on material that is in the text but not explicitly stated.
- *Prediction* involves using both understanding of the passage and knowledge of the topic to determine what might happen next.
- *Evaluation* requires the learner to give a global or comprehensive judgment about some aspect of the text, using both a literal understanding of the text and knowledge of the text's topic.
- *Personal response* requires readers to respond with their feelings for the text and the subject, relating their response to the content of the text and reflecting a literal understanding of the material.

This taxonomy summarizes the types of understanding that foreign language learners need to read a text with more than a literal understanding, so they will all be promoted during the course.

Together with these skills, and considering the difficulty of anticipating and discussing all the vocabulary students will need to know in the future, *word attack skills* will also be introduced. Nation (2008), Coxhead (2006) and Schmitt (2000) highlight the importance of introducing vocabulary management strategies to promote student independence. The same authors also agree as to which words should be selected for their treatment in class (high-frequency words) and which should be used as opportunities to put vocabulary learning strategies into practice (low-frequency words). To review and consolidate high-frequency words, Schmitt (2000) and Nation (2008) suggest using strategies for memorizing. Students will also be encouraged to keep a vocabulary notebook for recording words discussed in class, a cognitive strategy (Schmitt, 2000) that promotes manipulation of information in a meaningful way to facilitate memorization. Students' own strategies to remember vocabulary will also be acknowledged and discussed in class to evaluate their effectiveness. Low-frequency words, on the other hand, deserve a different treatment. In order to train the ability of guessing the meaning of these words, Schmitt (2000) and Nation (2008) suggest introducing the following strategies: analysis of affixes and roots, relating the unknown word to a similar one in L1, inference from context and dictionary use.

In order to choose the most appropriate *text attack skills*, Nuttall's (1996) inventory was consulted and adapted and the following were selected for their treatment in this course:

- Making use of non-linear text: reference apparatus, figures and graphic conventions.
- Recognizing and interpreting cohesive devices: involves being able to correctly interpret pro-forms (reference or substitution), elliptical expressions and lexical cohesion (synonymy, hyponymy, etc.).

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- Interpreting discourse markers: they are useful in helping the reader work out the meaning of difficult text. They often show the relationship the writer intended between two parts of the text.
 - Recognizing text organization: knowing how the text is organized enables a student to follow the argument, read selectively and easily locate specific information.

Including discussion and practice with skills and strategies known to facilitate task performance, in this case to understand texts or manage vocabulary, aims at developing learners' autonomy, or the individual's ability to take charge of his or her own learning (Cotterall, 2000).

Sequencing of contents

A spiral curriculum will be implemented to allow for repetition. This type of curriculum involves deciding on the major linguistic aspects to cover, and then covering them several times over a period of time at increasing levels of detail (Nation & Macalister, 2010).

At the beginning of the course students will be exposed to simpler text types which students are expected to find familiar, mostly including frequent and transparent vocabulary items and grammatical constructions, with tasks requiring readers to get to a literal comprehension of the meaning of the text. As the course evolves, texts will become gradually more complex and strange to students, involving less frequent vocabulary items or more elaborate constructions, and tasks will require more than a literal comprehension of the meaning of the texts. The aim of this progression is that students revisit previous teaching points, adding each time to their complexity, evolving from simple comprehension skills, to more complicated independent reading that requires the use of previous skills.

Format and presentation

The aim of this part of the curriculum design process is to choose the teaching and learning techniques and to present an outline of activities to be included in individual lessons.

Following Macalister (2014), this reading course will provide opportunities for intensive reading, extensive reading and fluency practice. Support for inclusion of these components comes from Nation's (2007) *Four Strands Approach*. The four strands are: meaning-focused input, language-focused learning, meaning-focused output, and fluency development. According to its author, a well-balanced course should devote roughly equal amounts of time to each strand.

The *meaning-focused input* strand involves learning through listening and reading by focusing on understanding the ideas and messages conveyed. For this strand to take place, several conditions must be met: (1) most of what the learners are listening to or reading is already familiar to them, (2) the learners are interested in the input and want to understand it, (3) only a small proportion of the language features are unknown to the learners, (4) learners can gain some knowledge of the unknown language items through context clues and background knowledge, and (5) there are large quantities of input (Nation, 2007). Learning from meaning-focused input is fragile, so large quantities of input should be provided. An extensive reading program will be implemented as one way of providing such quantities of comprehensible input.

Language-focused learning involves the deliberate learning of language features such as spelling, vocabulary, grammar and discourse. Although the ultimate aim of this strand is to help learners deal with messages, its short-term aim is to learn language items. Examples of activities included in this strand are: learning vocabulary from word cards, intensive reading, translation, and the deliberate learning of strategies such as guessing from context or dictionary use. For learning to occur five conditions should be present: (1) learners give deliberate attention to language features, (2) learners should process the language features in deep and thoughtful ways, (3) opportunities should exist to give spaced, repeated attention to the same features, (4) features that are focused on should be simple and not dependent on developmental knowledge that the learners do not have, and (5) features that are studied in the language-focused learning strand should also occur often in the other strands of the course (Nation, 2007).

Finally, in the *fluency development* strand learners make the best use of what they already know. Fluency is defined by Nation as “the ability to process language receptively and productively at a reasonable speed” (2014, p. 11). Typical activities include speed reading, skimming and scanning, repeated reading, etc. The fluency strand only exists if the following conditions are present: (1) all of what the learners are reading is largely familiar to them, (2) the learners’ focus is on receiving, (3) there is some pressure or encouragement to perform at a faster than usual speed, and (4) there is a large amount of input.

The approach to teaching reading that will be implemented in this course contributes to three of the strands – meaning-focused input, fluency development, and language-focused learning (Macalister, 2014). Macalister also argues that focusing on the three strands mentioned above paves the way for the fourth strand, meaning-focused output, which involves learning through speaking and writing. However, since the development of productive skills is not an aim of this course, this strand will not be included.

Intensive reading

Intensive reading of texts, the type of reading that takes place in class, directed by the teacher and which focuses learners’ attention on meaning as expressed in grammatical structures, vocabulary or reading strategies, fits into the language-focused learning strand of a course and it is a means of increasing students’ knowledge of language features and control of reading strategies. It can have two goals: comprehension of the text or showing how different language features contribute to the communicative purpose of the text. In both cases, learners need to be engaged with the meaning of the text to be able to notice the language used to convey the message (Macalister, 2014). According to Nation (2009), the major principle for determining the focus of the teaching should be analyzing items that will occur in a wide range of texts. “We want them [students] to gain knowledge of the language and ways of dealing with the language rather than an understanding of a particular message” (Nation, 2009, p. 28). Following Nation’s recommendations (2009), intensive work on reading texts will focus on the following aspects:

- a) Comprehension
- b) Vocabulary
- c) Grammar
- d) Cohesion

The following exercises will be used to focus on the aspects of texts mentioned above:

- a) To promote *comprehension* of the text, different forms of questions will be used: pronominal questions, yes/no questions, true/false sentences, information transfer diagrams, translation of fragments or writing a summary of the text.
- b) Work on *vocabulary* will involve guiding students’ attention to high-frequency words and introducing and practicing vocabulary learning strategies. Techniques for dealing with high frequency vocabulary will include: putting the word in an exercise to complete after reading, spending time on a word during the reading and making a glossary before learners read the text.
- c) *Grammar* features will also be the focus of attention during intensive reading, especially to help learners get a clear interpretation of a grammatically complex part of a text. Again, high-frequency items will be given sustained attention and strategies will be presented to deal with selected grammatical features. Activities will include: guessing the part of speech of a word, the *What does what?* exercise (Nation, 2009), which makes learners look for the noun verb relationships by writing subjects and objects of verbs; the *coordination* activity, which involves identifying the two parts of a sentence that are being coordinated by *and*, *but*, or *or*; and *simplifying noun groups*, which involves identifying the items following the headwords.
- d) Focusing on *cohesive devices* will allow learners to concentrate on the message at a level beyond the sentence. Activities will include selecting reference

words and helping learners see how a sentence is related to something that has been mentioned elsewhere in the text, telling learners where there is ellipsis and asking them to recover what is left unsaid by referring to a previous part of the text, etc.

An approach to reading that combines *top-down* and *bottom-up* processing will be adopted. *Top-down* processing encourages the reader to resort to his background knowledge to make predictions and inferences, and obtain a general idea of the text; while *bottom-up* processing helps readers analyze the text in detail, at the level of the sentence or the word, looking at difficulties related with syntax or vocabulary. Both processing methods complement each other and can be applied when the reader first meets a text, to overcome problems that may arise when dealing with difficult or confusing parts of the text, or to correct wrong interpretations (Nuttall, 1996).

Guidance will be provided before reading, to activate relevant schemata and to help readers get a global impression of the text and the way it is organized; while reading is in progress, directing students' attention to the important points in the text, providing scaffolding and raising awareness of possible pitfalls; and after reading has been completed, for learners to evaluate the text as a whole and respond to it, relating it to the outside world and to their previous knowledge.

Extensive/Narrow reading

Extensive reading is considered by many authors (Nuttall, 1996; Schmitt, 2000; Waring, 2006, 2011; Waring & Nation, 2004; Waring & Takaki, 2003; Krashen, 1993, 2011) the most effective way of increasing exposure to written texts, in order to enhance the development of reading skills and vocabulary. Implementation of an extensive reading program requires large amounts of varied graded reading material to encourage reading of texts chosen by the students themselves according to their interests and level (Day and Bamford, 2002; Nation, 2009).

The advantages of working with such literature cannot be discussed but, since the aim of the course is to develop learners' skills in reading academic texts, it is believed that learners would obtain more benefit from reading texts which are more related to their needs. A *narrow reading* (Krashen, 2004) program that involves reading many texts about a single topic and that includes access to a wide range of texts on specific nursing topics, is recommended as an appropriate alternative to extensive reading in this case. Repeated exposure to the same vocabulary or structures that are expected to occur in texts about the same topic, guarantees their learning (Krashen, 2004). The background knowledge readers gain as they read about the same topic can also mean that the text becomes easier to understand after the first few pages, and therefore, acquisition of aspects of the language becomes easier, too.

The main difficulty that may arise when using authentic texts for narrow reading is that they may have a very heavy vocabulary load and do not set up the conditions needed for successful learning from meaning focused input (Nation, 2009). Nation offers alternatives to compensate for this difficulty, such as *glossing*, i.e. providing the meanings of words in L1 in the margin next to the line containing an unknown word, and *computer-assisted reading*, which can assist learners in understanding the text without taking them too far away from the text. Cobb's [Compleat Lexical Tutor](#) offers users the possibility of feeding a text into the webpage and clicking on an unknown word to read a definition.

Learners won't be required to do elaborate comprehension tests or exercises on the material they read in this segment of the course. They will only be required to fill out a short record form indicating the title of the text they have just read, the date, how long it took to read, and a brief comment on their opinion.

Fluency development

When readers read fluently, they make efficient use of what they have learned, including vocabulary, grammatical constructions, knowledge of type of text and background knowledge. Although reading speed depends on reading purpose and the difficulty of the text, slow reading can be considered the opposite of fluent reading, especially when it does

not lead to comprehension. It has been suggested that reading at a speed lower than 100 words per minute can affect comprehension (Nation, 2009).

Macalister (2014) and Nation (2014) suggest two ways of developing reading fluency: a *speed reading course* and *repeated reading*.

Repeated reading involves learners silently re-reading texts that they have read before and noting the time each reading took, so that they have the goal of reading it faster each time. Research has found gains for both fluency and comprehension through this activity. A study by Taguchi *et al* (2004) found that after participating in repeated reading students showed enhanced word recognition skills and better comprehension and the reading gains from practiced passages were transferred to new unpracticed passages.

Silent reading speed can be increased by means of a *speed reading programme* consisting of timed readings followed by comprehension questions. Time taken to read and comprehension measures must be recorded, and, again, readers should try to beat their previous speed and comprehension scores. Research has shown that reading rates improve on the speed-reading texts, and that these reading rate gains transfer to other types of text (Macalister, 2014).

Monitoring and assessment

Douglas' (2000) definition of *specific purpose language test* will be the guiding principle behind assessment procedures during this course:

A specific purpose language test is one in which test content and methods are derived from an analysis of a *specific purpose target language use situation*, so that test tasks and content are *authentically* representative of tasks in the target situation, allowing for an interaction between the test taker's *language ability* and *specific purpose content knowledge*, on the one hand, and the test tasks on the other. Such a test allows us to make inferences about a test taker's capacity to use language in the specific purpose domain (p. 19).

Target language use (TLU) situation can be defined as the "situations in which the persons to be assessed will need to read" (Alderson, 2000, p. 3). In this case TLU involves reading for thesis writing and professional development. The aim of assessment will be, then, to estimate the extent to which students can successfully carry out reading tasks in the same way they are expected to do it in the future.

Task authenticity is achieved by carefully considering test instructions, prompts and texts and by trying to design tests that engage test taker's specific purpose language ability. Authenticity, then, is defined as the extent to which the test engages test takers in the kind of tasks characteristic of TLU situation (Douglas, 2000). This means that, when designing tests, it is essential to provide learners with the information needed for assessing the communicative situation and recognizing cues in the environment that allow them to identify the situation and his or her role in it.

An analysis of TLU situation in our context reveals that during thesis-writing students will need to read a number of research articles, in a short time, before conducting their own research, to decide on their relevance for their own research. After selecting the most useful articles, students will need to read those texts in detail, in order to summarize their contents, or select fragments for translation or paraphrasing. Similarly, when reading academic texts for professional development, future nurses will read the texts with the aim of relating their content to their own practice, and may be required to present their findings to a specific audience. These TLU situations suggest that reading should be assessed in terms of how well students can determine the main idea of a text, whether they are able to understand its contents, including details; and how well they can summarize its ideas in Spanish, translate fragments of it, or represent its contents in graphical form.

Two types of assessment will take place during this course: formal assessment, including comprehension tests and a reading project, and informal assessment, including observation, speed reading graphs and reading logs.

There will be two comprehension tests along the course, one taking place in the middle of the course, and the other one at the end. Together with a reading project done in groups and short-term achievement tests, they will help determine whether a student has achieved the goals of the course. Such tests will try to simulate the situations in which students will require reading skills to solve problems in their professional or academic life.

Some authors (Munby, 1978; Davies, 1968; and Grabe, 1991, cited in Alderson, 2000) refer to the possibility of dividing the reading skill in micro-skills, while authors such as Alderson (1990, cited in Alderson 2000) argue that at least part of the reading process involves the simultaneous use of several overlapping skills. Following the latter view, the skills and strategies considered relevant in the reading process will be isolated in order to assess students' knowledge and use of such skills. Doing so may contribute to diagnosing problems that may affect reading comprehension and designing actions to improve problem areas.

The kinds of exercises used in formal tests will not differ significantly from the ones used to present and practice different teaching points in the syllabus. Such exercises will include comprehension questions, which can be used to check literal comprehension, inferences and critical response. Grammatical knowledge will be tested by means of translation of fragments, which involves word recognition skills and vocabulary knowledge, as well as grammatical knowledge.

Tests will be arranged in the following way:

- The first tests will assess understanding of the main ideas or facts in simple texts, as well as the ability to draw simple inferences. Students may be asked to read a series of short texts to determine which is most appropriate for a specific purpose, to complete gapped summaries of the text in Spanish, or to answer questions about details of the text.
- As we progress through the stages of the course, test input will involve gradually more difficult texts, based on which students will be asked to write summaries or versions of selected fragments in Spanish. Students will also be asked to answer questions about the text which will require them to make simple inferences or collect data from different parts of the text.

Vocabulary development is an essential part of this reading course and it will be evaluated as part of formal course assessment (Schmitt, 2000; Alderson, 2000). Formal tests will include exercises to assess recognition of words discussed in class, knowledge of their different aspects, word formation and use of vocabulary management strategies presented and practiced in the course.

For the annual reading project, students will be asked to choose a topic in groups, related to their area of study and they will do research on it during the second part of the year. Learners will gather information from the Internet or other sources and every two weeks, each group will report to another group on their findings. Toward the end of the course, groups will make an oral presentation on their topic in Spanish. They will also be asked to prepare a written report briefly describing the sources used and the main points of information found. Their performance will be assessed on the basis of their ability to integrate information from the texts and synthesize it.

It is a well-known fact that the assessment event can be perceived by students as a distressing situation, so by relying only on formal assessment "we risk inducing an understanding of the text, which is 'lower' than the same individuals might be able to achieve in other settings" (Alderson, 2000, p. 54). For that reason, informal assessment procedures will also be carried out, to inform and guide subsequent teaching and learning processes. This kind of assessment will be performed through observation and recording of students' performance during task

completion in class and during group work and also through the dialogue with students about the ways in which they handle tasks.

Speed reading graphs, where learners record their reading speed and comprehension measures, and *reading logs*, where learners keep record of the books or texts read during extensive reading will also be used as tools of informal assessment.

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Appendix 1 Course Goals

The fact that goals are at the core of Nation and Macalister's (2010) model highlights the need to have clear goals for the course.

General learning goals

By the end of the course, students are expected to:

- Find and select appropriate texts for their academic and professional goals.
- Read academic texts from their specialty, understanding the ideas stated by the author.
- Adopt strategies to overcome the difficulties that may arise when reading a text.
- Expand their general, academic and technical vocabulary to be able to read texts fluently.

Specific learning goals

The course has been designed to help learners achieve the following goals:

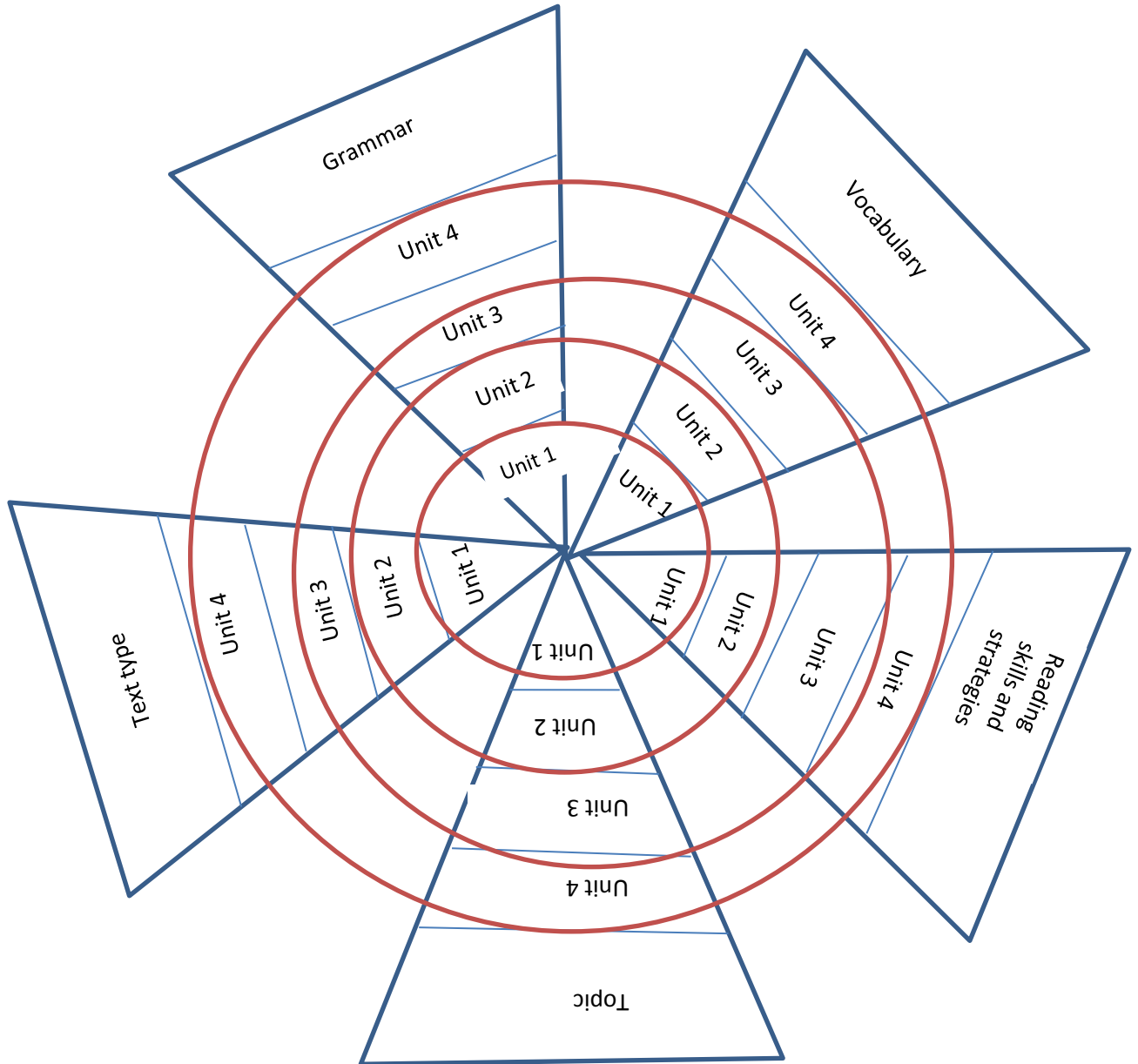
- To activate previous knowledge that may facilitate reading, both in relation to nursing and to formal knowledge of the language.
- To develop a range of strategies to determine main and supporting ideas in a text, in order to write a summary.
- To choose the most appropriate way of reading a text according to reading purpose.
- To identify cohesion and coherence mechanisms that may hinder or facilitate reading.
- To recognize and familiarize with the characteristics of the most common academic genres.
- To identify and understand the most common grammatical structures of academic prose.
- To identify and avoid the potential syntactic pitfalls that may hinder understanding of a text and whose management contributes to fluent reading.
- To monitor their own understanding, identifying the difficulties that may arise during reading, in order to determine strategies to solve the problem.
- To develop strategies for recording already known vocabulary and for managing unknown vocabulary.
- To select proper search terms when searching online information and to tell the difference between reliable and unreliable websites for selecting the text that best suits their needs.
- To apply the skills and strategies discussed in the course to select, read, summarize and retell in Spanish the content of a series of texts from the field of nursing, as part of the annual reading project.
- To integrate the contents of the texts read as part of the annual reading project into a presentation for a specific audience.
- To develop lasting reading habits.

- To read fluently, making effective use of what they have already learned, including vocabulary, grammatical constructions, knowledge of type of text and background knowledge.

Course Syllabus

Unit	Topics	Text types	Reading skills and strategies	Grammatical structures	Vocabulary
1	Basic concepts of nursing practice The nursing profession	Fragments from introductory nursing textbooks Brochures	Text attack skills (TAS): making use of non-linear text: reference apparatus, figures and graphic conventions.	Grammatical categories: noun, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, articles, prepositions. Word-formation: affixation in nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs; compounding. Plural nouns The simple noun phrase (NP): determiners, genitive case. Verbs and verb phrases: copula be, specific lexical verbs.	Selected words from the most frequent 1,000 words in West's General Service List (GSL). Technical vocabulary from the field of Nursing. Selected words from Coxhead's Academic Word List (AWL).
2	Nursing procedures Pressure ulcer Wound management	Fragments from introductory nursing textbooks WHO/Nursing Associations Guidelines PAHO alerts and updates Articles from nursing magazines or websites.	Reading Comprehension skills (RCS): literal comprehension,	NP: premodification (adjectives and nouns as premodifiers, participial premodifiers, coordinated premodifiers)	
3	Patient assessment Common non-communicable diseases (diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease)	Fragments from introductory nursing textbooks	Word attack skills (WAS): analysis of word parts.	NP: postmodification (prepositional phrase, to-clause, ed-clause, ing-clause, and relative clause as postmodifiers) NPs with multiple postmodifiers	
4	Evidence-based nursing Gerontological nursing.	Research Articles: abstract and introduction	RCS: reorganization of information WAS: keeping a vocabulary notebook	Verbs and verb phrases: "existence" verbs, specific lexical verbs, specific prepositional verbs. Modal verbs. Auxiliary verbs. Structure of the verb phrase: modal, auxiliary and main verbs. Tense and aspect: simple present and past tense; perfect and progressive aspect. Passive voice: specific passive verbs.	

Graphic Representation of the Syllabus



This activity is based on Nation's (2009) description of issue logs
