How to Read the Body Paragraphs of an Article From a Perspective of Skimming

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Often, the students want to cover a lot of material. Using an average rate of speed to cover a large amount of reading matter would take much more time than is usually available. Good readers, however, can cope with large amounts of material by skimming. Readers can follow the skimming steps mentioned below. It is important to note a basic difference between skimming and scanning, between skimming and normal reading. This article mainly introduces and analyzes some exceptions of reading body paragraphs of a text in skimming to get the main idea of a text and arrive at a conclusion of a text. It is advised that readers try them as they can be effective in the English reading class. It will help readers become happy and independent ones.

Keywords: body, exceptions, skimming, main idea, conclusion

Introduction
In today’s information-laden and time-constrained world, we are required to digest an increasing amount of written and printed material. Most people want to be able to deal with their daily reading faster and also recall it effectively. There is often a great deal of material that students would like to cover either because they are interested in a particular field or because they wish to do so to meet course requirements. Using an average rate of speed to cover a large amount of reading matter would take much more time than is usually available. Good readers, however, can cope with large amounts of material by skimming.

Definition and Interpretation
Skimming is getting the essence of material without reading all of it. To extract the important parts, you skim reading material.

Both skimming and scanning are two types of rapid reading, and they make it necessary to skip over the parts, which are non-essential to you. They differ, however, in respect of purpose, attention to meaning, and reading rate. In addition, there are some strategies used for skimming, which is different from scanning. Skimming also differs from scanning in that it is an effort to get general information rather than specific facts.

The purpose of skimming is to get the general meaning of something you are reading for pleasure or to get an overview of material that you are seeing for the first time. Skimming is also appropriate for reviewing material that you have read previously.

Whatever form of skimming, skimming is an excellent way to increase the effectiveness of your study time. They save your study time and increase your learning.

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Skimming does involve attention to meaning, but in a global and general sense. The reading rate for skimming may be twice as fast as the normal reading speed, because many words—even whole sections of material—are skipped.

It is important to note a basic difference between skimming and normal reading. While skimming leaves out some parts of the reading material, the reader would usually omit no part at all in normal reading.

**The Steps for Skimming**

Here are the steps for skimming:

1. Read the title, sub-headings (if there are).

   Title and sub-headings are the key language that can best reflect the content of the article. Take a title for example: *Never Be a Quitter in Face of Life*. When readers look at the title, it feels like a suggestion or instruction, that is, the author’s writing purpose may be to persuade readers. Readers may ask who put forward this suggestion and to whom it is suggested? This is actually a prediction.

2. Read the introduction. If there is no introduction, read the first paragraph in its entirety. Read the introduction or first paragraph at normal speed all the way through. The opening paragraph often contains an introduction or overview of what will be talked about.

4. From the second paragraph on or the paragraph under the introduction on, readers need to read the first sentence of each paragraph in the body of a text or passage. But there are exceptions. Sometimes, readers need to read the second sentence of a paragraph, sometimes more sentences of a paragraph. Or sometimes, readers can skip a big part of a paragraph or even skip the whole paragraph. This article will introduce and analyze some exceptions of reading body paragraphs of a text in skimming to get the main idea of a text and arrive at a conclusion of a text. Look at nine exceptions below.

5. Read the summary. If there is no summary, read more fully the ending paragraphs in its entirety, because they often contain a summary, a conclusion, or a prediction.

6. With story articles, readers need to search for information about who, when, where, what, why, or how, as they provide the main information about the article.

**Exceptions**

Here are some exceptions of reading body paragraphs of a text in skimming:

1. Exception 1: With a turn during events, such as words like: instead, however, but, otherwise, nevertheless, yet, still, instead, etc.

   Listen more than you talk. Questioning can sound like interrogation. “Instead, adopt an attitude of curiosity rather than control.” Ask questions like “How so? What do you think now? Were you surprised? What will you do now? What’s your plan? Is this something you want help with?” If your object is only to listen, you should be careful not to be preparing your response while your teen is still talking. You will hear better that way, and they will be encouraged to talk more. (Wang, 2019a)

   Analysis: Example 1 is a paragraph of the body of an article. Readers need to read the second sentence of the paragraph, with a turn during events “Instead” (Instead, adopt an attitude of curiosity rather than control), as the idea behind “instead” is the central idea of this paragraph. As can be seen, “instead” indicates a turn during events. Besides the word “instead”, there are other similar words which show a turn during events. However, on the contrary, but, otherwise, nevertheless, yet, still, etc.
2. Exception 2: The first sentence is a question, and the second sentence is an answer.

But what happens to young people without access to these important resources? For them, skipping college to pursue business success is like investing their savings in lottery tickets in the hope that they will be a multimillion-dollar winner, or failing to pursue an education because they expect to be an NBA superstar. The reality is that the next college dropout will not be LeBron James Cameron, or Mark Zuckerberg. He will likely belong to the millions of college dropouts you don’t hear the press singing about. These are the 34 million Americans over 25 with some college credits but no diploma. (Wang, 2019b)

Analysis: Example 2 is a paragraph of the body of an article. The first sentence raises the question (what happens to young people without access to these important resources?). The second sentence (For them, skipping college to pursue business success is like investing their savings in lottery tickets …) is a direct answer. In addition to reading the first sentence of the paragraph, which is a question, readers need to read the second sentence of the paragraph, which is the answer to the question when skimming the paragraph. Sometimes, if a paragraph is complicated, there are exceptions in that there is no immediate answer after the question. Instead of answering in time, the author introduces the background of the question and then gives the answer of the question. Readers need to skip the background of a few sentences of the paragraph, and then look for the answer to the question. Here are some examples.

3. Exception 3: Complex question and answer

When the weather is hot, you go to a lake or an ocean. When you are near a lake or an ocean, you feel cool. “Why? The sun makes the earth hot; but it cannot make the water very hot.” Although the air over the earth becomes hot, the air over the water keeps cool. The hot air over the earth goes up. Then the cool air over the water moves in and takes the place of the hot air. When you are near a lake or an ocean, you feel the cool air when it moves in. You feel the wind. And the wind makes you cool.

Analysis: Example 3 is a paragraph of the body of an article. The first and second sentences describe the phenomena introducing the background (When the weather is hot, you go to a lake or an ocean. When you are near a lake or an ocean, you feel cool.). The third sentence is the question (Why), and the answers are in the fourth sentence (The sun makes the earth hot; but it cannot make the water very hot.). When skimming the paragraph, readers may skip the background or phenomena of the first two sentences and read the third and fourth sentences of the paragraph directly, as they are sentences of question and answer expressing the central idea of the paragraph.

There is one thing to note in this paragraph: in the sentence of answering (The sun makes the earth hot; but it cannot make the water very hot.), the word with the turn during events “but” appears indicating that the author values more on the idea behind the word “but” (but it cannot make the water very hot.). What is behind the word “but” is the central idea of focus in this paragraph.

4. Exception 4: Even more complex type of question and answer

If our proper relation to nature is not opposition, then what is it? This question becomes complicated and difficult for us because none of us, as I have said, wants to live in “pure” primeval forest or in a “pure” primeval prairie; we don’t want to be eaten by grizzly bears; if we are gardeners, we have a legitimate quarrel with weeds; if, in Kentucky, we are trying to improve our pastures, we are likely to be enemies of the nodding thistle. But, do what we will, we remain under the spell of the primeval forests and prairies that we have cut down and broken; we turn repeatedly and with love to the thought of them and to their surviving remnants. We find ourselves attracted to the grizzly bears, too, and know that they and other great, dangerous animals remain alive in our imaginations, as they have been all through human time. Though we cut down the nodding thistles, we acknowledge their beauty and are glad to think that there must be someplace where they
Analysis: Example 4 is a paragraph of the body of an article. The first sentence is a question (“If our proper relation to nature is not opposition, then what is it?”). The second sentence (“This question . . .”) is a description of the background of the question. After background is the answer. When skimming the paragraph, a readers may skip the long description of the background to find the answered sentence (“But, do what we will, . . .”), which is the central idea of this paragraph.

5. Exception 5: Implicit type of question and answer.

But for linguists around the world, the announcement wasn’t about whether Oxford Dictionaries had lost it. It hadn’t—most linguists agree a word is a discrete unit that is meaningful; emojis fit that definition. Rather, it was recognition of the enormous effect that yellow smiley faces and other colorful emojis representing food, animals and hand gestures have had on the way people talk online. (Wang, 2019a)

Analysis: Example 5 is one paragraph of an article. In the first sentence (“But for linguists around the world, the announcement wasn’t about whether Oxford Dictionaries had lost it.”), there is a word “whether”, which indicates that the sentence involves an implied question. The second sentence (“It hadn’t.”) is the answer to the implied question (whether Oxford Dictionaries had lost it.). When skimming the paragraph, readers need to read the answer of the second sentence in addition to reading the question of the first sentence, which is the central idea of this paragraph.

6. Exception 6: The first sentence of a paragraph is too simple.

“Look at it this way”, Evans said. “There are estimates that as much as 70% of the meaning, we derive from a face-to-face encounter with someone comes from non-verbal cues: facial expressions, intonation, body language, and pitch.” This means words account for only around 30% of what we communicate. As an example, he noted the huge difference in meaning between saying “I love you.” as a statement with a falling intonation and saying “I love you?” as a question with a rising intonation. (Wang, 2019b)

Analysis: Example 6 is a paragraph of the body of an article. The first sentence is too simple and expresses an action, but does not express the outcome of the action and, therefore, readers need to read the second sentence (There are estimates that as much as 70% of the meaning comes from non-verbal cues: facial expressions, intonation, body language and pitch.) with the result of the action, so that readers can capture the whole meaning of this paragraph.

7. Exception 7: Sometimes, the first sentence of a paragraph is too general, abstract, or there are new or unknown words in it, so that the reader cannot understand the meaning of the sentence.

In Germany, in contrast with France, friendship is much more distinctly a matter of feeling. Adolescents, boys and girls, from deeply sentimental attachments, walk and talk together not so much to polish their wits as to share their hopes and fears and dreams, to form a common front against the world of school and family and to join in a kind of mutual discovery of each other’s and their own inner life . . . .

English friendships follow a still different pattern. Their basis is shared activity. Activities at different stages of life may be of very different kinds—Discovering a common interest in school, serving together in the armed forces, taking part in a foreign mission, staying in the same country house during a crisis . . . . (Ying, 2000)

Analysis: In example 7, there are two paragraphs of the body of an article. When skimming the second paragraph, the second sentence needs to be read by readers (“Their basis is shared activity”), because the first sentence (“English friendships follow a still different pattern.”) is too general. It is impossible for readers to
know how British friendship is different from others from the first sentence, so skimming the second paragraph; readers need to read the second sentence of the paragraph in order to know that British friendship is based on common interests, hobbies, or activities, to understand how British friendship is different from others. So, when skimming the second paragraph, readers need to read the second sentence to truly understand the central idea of the second paragraph.

8. Exception 8: A connecting sentence/a sentence from the previous paragraph

1. The word “should” indicates that you aren’t doing what you would benefit from, and you are not entirely resolute in your choice, either. Enter regret. Cue the reinforcement of existing negative messages you already hold about yourself. “This is why I am still fat,” “This is why I don’t have the body I want,” “I am not good enough.” Now you feel bad about yourself for not going to the gym, so you pour a glass of drink, have a comforting snack and turn on the TV to take your mind off feeling bad about yourself. And tomorrow you will do it again if not about going to gym, about something else. Possibly many things.

2. “‘Should’ goes hand in hand with self-reproach.” The problem with guilt is that it is largely worthless in terms of getting you to do anything. You may have been raised in a house where guilt and shame were used to get you to do all kinds of everyday things, like be nice to your sister, clean your room and go to church on Sundays. Guilt may feel familiar to you, and humans seek what we know, even if it is bad. But guilt doesn’t get you to do the big things like find a job that makes you happy, leave a relationship that sucks the life out of you, or manifest your dreams in love, life and the pursuit of happiness (Wang, 2019b).

Analysis: In example 8, there are two paragraphs of the body of an article. When skimming the second paragraph, readers need to read the second sentence of the second paragraph (The problem with guilt is that it is largely worthless in terms of getting you to do anything.) because the first sentence of paragraph 2 (“Should” goes hand in hand with self-reproach.) is a connecting sentence/a sentence from the previous paragraph that summarizes the central idea of the previous first paragraph. The second sentence of the second paragraph is the central idea of the second paragraph. Therefore, when skimming the second paragraph, readers need to read the second sentence of the second paragraph in order to really understand the central idea of the second paragraph.

9. Exception 9: Quotation

Para 1. The variety of things put up for sale is really wonderful—dishes, books, used clothing, tools, tires, empty bottles, bicycles, furniture ….

Para 2. “You wouldn’t believe the stuff people will buy,” says Mrs. Jerry McNeely of Houston, Texas, who has held two garage sales with friends, “On the other hand, you wouldn’t believe some of the things (people will put out to sell).”

Para 3. Why would Americans want to shop by searching among someone else’ cast-offs?

Para 4. Rising living costs are considered by almost everyone as a reason both for holding sales and for attending them .... (Gao, 1998)

Analysis: In example 9, there are four paragraphs of the body of an article. After reading the first sentence of the first paragraph (The variety of things put up for sale is really wonderful—dishes, books, used clothing, tools, tires, empty bottles, bicycles, furniture …), readers just glance at the second paragraph to only find the second paragraph is a quotation quoting Mrs. Jerry McNeely, which is used just to explain the central idea of the first paragraph. In this case, after reading the first sentence of the first paragraph, which is a topic sentence of the first paragraph, readers can skip the whole paragraph of the second paragraph and jump to read the first sentences of paragraphs 3 and 4 directly in that the second paragraph is a quotation, which just explains the central idea of the first paragraph.
Conclusion

In conclusion, readers can skim a text according to the steps mentioned above, and they especially need to pay attentively to the exceptions presented above when skimming the body of a text, so that readers can successfully get the main idea of a text, summarizing the outline of a text, and finally arrive at the conclusion of a text. In this way, readers won’t feel difficulty with them and will feel much less worried or anxious, successfully complete reading and build confidence in teacher and themselves. Why not try it. It will help readers become happy and independent ones.

References

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