

**NININS 2020****International Scientific Forum «National Interest, National Identity and National Security»****READING STRATEGIES AND LANGUAGE WORLD PICTURE  
RELATIONSHIP IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

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**Abstract**

Reading skills are essential in foreign language acquisition. The study is aimed at exploring the relationships between reading strategies used by foreign language learners while reading a foreign language text and their language world picture. The population of the study consisted of 22 undergraduate students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (BEd) program and majoring in teaching foreign languages. When learners have to deal with a new text written in an unknown language, they face the necessity to decipher and clarify the meaning of new words. They should be encouraged to scan the text for all possible context clues and preview the text structure before they start reading it. The research investigates how appropriate selection of reading strategies and knowledge of background cultural information help readers with the previous experience in learning foreign languages make inferences from the authentic text in an unknown foreign language. The results of the research indicate that even students with some experience in learning a foreign language need special training in acquiring reading strategies that enhance understanding of the text.

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## 1. Introduction

The issue of the interaction of language and culture has always interested the practitioners teaching a foreign language and the linguists who study the language beyond the forms of expression but try to analyze the correlation between national cultural codes and language world picture. In modern paradigm of linguistic research 'one of the priority issues is studying a ratio of language, culture and thinking and various methods of reflecting reality in this or that ethnos' (Kozlova, 2017, p. 1).

The language world picture is one of the basic concepts of linguistics; it is taken to mean a set of a person's knowledge and perception of the world around. The term has been interpreted in a variety of ways, most known of which include the system of views, mediated by the language spoken by a certain ethnicity (Rudnev, 2001), the interconnection between the language and the way of thinking (Shmelev, 2001), or a scheme of the world perception fixed in a language used by a certain group of people (Yakovleva, 1994). The central point in all the definitions is the obvious and indisputable connection of language and national culture.

A person's language world picture is formed by the cultural ethnicity they belong to. A person's ideas of the world are based on the collective ideas of other people which have been nurtured for centuries and that are embedded in the language memory of the nation. An individual conceptualizes, interprets, and categorizes the external reality he lives in, and then reflects this reality in the language. A language is deemed as 'a mediating link between a person and the world surrounding him/her' (Maslova, 2001, p. 5). Thus, 'in the language classroom it is not just a question of learners developing knowledge about another culture but of learners coming to understand themselves in relation to some other culture' (Levina et al, 2016, p. 278). In the globalizing world, there goes a non-stop process of reshaping one's language world picture and adjusting to a new constantly changing cultural and language environment, at the same time avoiding losing identity.

Lexis plays the leading role in shaping the language world picture, and its study 'takes a specific part in the study of the language world picture' (Frantceva, 2018). It includes word groups that reflect universal concepts but more specifically, the words typical and important for a certain ethnicity. In this respect, 'nationally-coloured' words and expressions can be considered as the indicators of the mentality of a nation. It leads to the hypothesis that when dealing with a foreign language, people confront not only unknown words but also a different national mentality, which the language reflects.

The subject matter of this paper is the analysis of the interrelation of a person's language world picture and their reading strategies awareness in the process of cross-cultural communication and foreign language learning. The article is aimed at determining the role of national mentality and an individual's language picture of the world in eliciting and understanding information from a new / unknown foreign language text.

In the globalizing world, people have access to information from international sources on a grand scale; communication between people belonging to different cultures has become commonplace. The mass media exchange is also growing at unprecedented speed. In today's fast-moving and increasingly digital world, people get exposed to the massive flow of information, most of which is written text. In order to deal with this deluge of publications, people need to raise their awareness of different reading

strategies. It becomes especially relevant when dealing with an authentic text, which means a text that is unprocessed or adapted, and which is not written for the language classroom.

When students have to deal with a new text written in an unknown language, they face the necessity to decipher and clarify the meaning of new words. Students need to be aided with helpful context clues about the meaning and structure of new words. The skill of determining the meaning of unknown words aligns with the standard linguistic competence which can apply to any language that students confront. Most common context clues include looking for international words, dates, and subject-specific words (terms), scanning for familiar personal or geographical names, analysing meaningful word parts (root and affixes), or considering the position of words in a sentence (grammar analysis). Signal words, or transition words, can cue students about the organizational pattern of the text and show the connection between ideas. When reading various informational texts, typographical cues (bold type, italics, and font) or illustrations help students infer the meaning of unknown words and concepts. Students should be encouraged to scan the text for all possible context clues and preview the text structure before they start reading it.

## **2. Problem Statement**

A recent body of research on the taxonomies of reading strategies used by foreign language learners reveals that one of the essential reading strategies and the key higher-level reading comprehension skills is making inferences. Inference can be defined as the ability to connect the information in the text with the information /knowledge that is in mind. Students need to focus on both explicit and implicit details to understand the text better. Explicit details appear in the text, whereas implicit details are not on the surface; they relate to students' prior knowledge and experiences. This circumstance again enhances the role of the language world picture and the necessity to develop it.

Effective learners with well-formed language world picture use their background knowledge about words, and structure of sentences, and the text as a whole. Prior knowledge about the subject of the text comes into play to help figure out unfamiliar words and concepts in a new discourse. Similar results were obtained by other researchers (Guseva & Shamov, 2018; Kruchinina et al., 2018; Mieszkowska & Otwinowska-Kasztelanic, 2015; Smidfelt, 2018; Smidfelt & Weijer, 2019; Sokolova & Plisov, 2019).

## **3. Research Questions**

Starting with the premise that in foreign language learning successful reading comprehension does not occur automatically but is a result, alongside with other factors, of a complex interaction between the reader's selecting appropriate reading strategies and their language world picture, three research questions have been developed:

Are learners able to identify the main information in a text in an unknown foreign language relying not only on word information but also on the overall content information, including the layout and the text type?

Are learners aware of the reading strategies they use while reading a text, and are they able to build on the previous reading experience in other foreign languages?

What role do the cultural background, language world picture and previous knowledge play in reading comprehension?

#### 4. Purpose of the Study

The objective of the research was to explore the relationships between reading strategies used by foreign language learners while reading a foreign language text and their language world picture.

#### 5. Research Methods

The subjects of the study are 22 undergraduate students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (BEd) program and majoring in teaching foreign languages. All the participants are future teachers of English and German who are currently in their second and third year of studies. The second year participants are in their first year of formal German instruction and the 12th year of formal English instruction. The third year participants are in their second year of formal German instruction and the 13th year of formal English instruction.

The image is a screenshot of a news article from Deutsche Welle. The article is titled "La La Land" vence sete prêmios no Globo de Ouro. The main text states that the musical directed by Damien Chazelle won in all categories and is the most awarded film in the history of the Golden Globe. It also mentions that Meryl Streep gave a speech against Trump. Below the text are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Email, and a plus sign for more options. A large photograph shows Ryan Reynolds in a white tuxedo holding a Golden Globe award. Below the photo is a sub-header "OS PRINCIPAIS GANHADORES DO GLOBO DE OURO EM 2017" and the category "Melhor ator de comédia/musical". The text below the category describes Ryan Reynolds' win for his role in "La La Land" and mentions his personal life, including his wife Eva Mendes and his brother Carlos Mendes.

CULTURA

## "La La Land" vence sete prêmios no Globo de Ouro

Musical dirigido por Damien Chazelle vence em todas as categorias para as quais foi indicado e é o filme mais premiado da história do Globo de Ouro. Em tom político, Meryl Streep faz discurso contra Trump.

Data: 09.01.2017

Todas as galerias de fotos na Mediateca

Assuntos relacionados: Maximilian Schell, Globo de Ouro

Palavras-chave: Globo de Ouro, La La Land, Meryl Streep

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OS PRINCIPAIS GANHADORES DO GLOBO DE OURO EM 2017

### Melhor ator de comédia/musical

Ryan Gosling ganhou o prêmio de melhor ator na categoria comédia/musical por seu papel em "La La Land". No palco, ele agradeceu à esposa, Eva Mendes, que durante as gravações do filme estava grávida e teve que cuidar sozinha da filha de 2 anos e do irmão, Carlos Mendes, que tinha câncer. Gosling dedicou o prêmio ao irmão de Eva, que morreu em abril do ano passado.

**Figure 1.** The experimental text: online-news of "Deutsche Welle" from 09.01.2017  
<https://www.dw.com/pt-br/la-la-land-vence-sete-pr%C3%AAs-no-globo-de-ouro/a-37061204-0>

The data for the research was gathered with the following test instruments: a text in an unknown foreign language; questions to control understanding; a learner questionnaire.

The entire group was offered a text in an unknown foreign language. After a short group analysis, a text in Portuguese was chosen. On the one hand, no one in the test group learned Portuguese or Spanish; on the other hand, an Indo-European / Roman language, such as Portuguese, allows to reach better lexical coverage due to international, Indo-European and Roman loans used in the text. As can be seen in Figure 01, the next important context clue is the layout of the text and the text type. A similar identifying task for a text type was used in the research of Neuner (2009). The concept was adapted and expanded for this experiment.

After scan reading the text, the students were expected to answer 5 W-Questions to check text understanding: Who? What? When? Where? Why? The questions were presented in the form of a group-structured interview.

For investigation of the relationship between previous cultural and strategic knowledge and reading process, the learners were asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire included 12 items: 9 questions focused on using reading strategies, and three questions focused on their personal attitude to the reading task. Five-point Likert scale (Strongly disagree – Disagree – Neither agree nor disagree – Agree – Strongly agree) was used.

## 6. Findings

The study was designed to investigate the relationships between the reading strategies used by foreign language learners while reading a foreign language text and their language world picture. The results of the research have been divided into three parts according to the posed research questions.

*Research question 1: Are the learners able to identify the main information in a text in unknown foreign language relying not only on word information but also on the overall content information including the layout and the text type?*

For answering this research question, a text-understanding test was conducted in the form of an open interview with the whole group. The structured interview contained W-Questions on the main content of the text and showed that 100 % of the learners understood the offered text: the Film “La La Land” and starring Ryan Gosling won several Golden Globe Prizes, and he thanked his wife Eva Mendes for support. At the first stage of the study, the learners were not asked about the details of their process of understanding the text. The results of the interview exceeded the expectations because even after a short scan reading the learners were able to provide details about the family issues mentioned by Ryan Gosling.

*Research question 2: Are the learners aware of the reading strategies they use while reading a text, and are they able to build on previous reading experience in other foreign languages?*

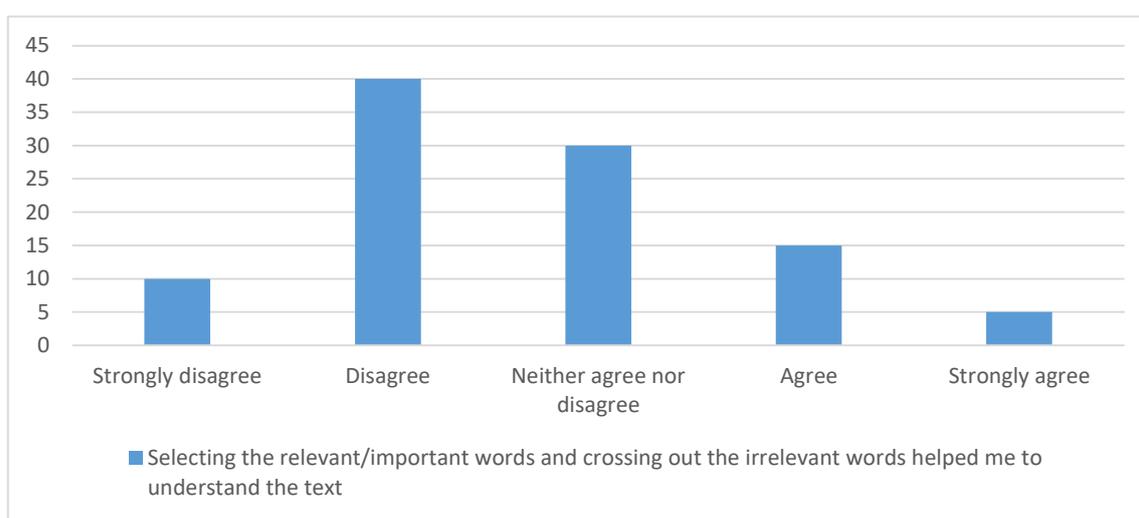
At this stage, the results of the questionnaire pertaining to reading strategies and personal attitude were analysed. The list of reading strategies from Funk (2014) was used in this paper. Some of the strategies were experimentally confirmed by Malloggi (2018).

100 % of the learners are aware of the strategies they used while scanning the article; to get the key information, they should pay attention to numbers, photos and the layout. The essential instrument for understanding the text is familiar words. They can be divided into several groups: proper names,

international words, Indo-European words, words familiar from other native or learned languages (English, French, Russian), keywords (subject and objects of the sentences).

The collected data on the other reading strategies showed much more diverse results. 0 % of the learners were aware of selecting text linkers and connectors for understanding the logical structure of the text. This can be explained by the length of formal instruction and lack of syntax training at the beginners' level.

The most disparate results were obtained for the reading strategy "Selecting the relevant/important words and crossing out the irrelevant words". Although 100 % of the learners emphasized the role of the keywords in the text, as it can be seen in Figure 02, few learners were familiar with the strategy of identifying the key message of the text.



**Figure 2.** Role of the keywords in the text

*Research question 3: What role do the cultural background, language world picture, and previous knowledge play?*

To answer the last research question, we would like to cite one learner's answer that might lead to further research. Although the mentioned learner belonged to the group of low-performing students, she had the best results in the group. In the post-task interview, she admitted she was a great fan of Ryan Gosling and of the film 'La La Land', so here the student's cultural background and previous knowledge helped her understand the text better even without using specific reading strategies. The rest of the learners participating in the study revealed a regular positive correlation between having background knowledge about the film and text comprehension.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research was designed to investigate the relationships between the reading strategies used by foreign language learners while reading a text in an unknown foreign language and their language world picture.

The study was carried out with 22 undergraduate students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (BEd) program majoring in teaching foreign languages, who are currently in their 2d and 3d year of studies. At the first stage, the research was investigating how the learners were able to identify the main information in a text in an unknown foreign language relying not only on word information but also on the overall content information including the layout and the text type. The analysis of the structured interview demonstrated that 100 % of the learners understood the main contents of the offered text.

During the second stage, the study investigated whether the learners were aware of the reading strategies they use while reading a text and were able to build on the previous reading experience in other foreign languages. The findings on different strategies significantly differentiated between students. 100% of the learners were aware of the strategies they used while scanning the article to identify familiar words. However, the analysis of the collected data on other reading strategies showed much more diverse results. None of the participants was aware of selecting text linkers and connectors for understanding the logical structure of the text, and few students were familiar with the strategy of identifying the key message of the text.

The last stage of the study dealt with the role of cultural background, language world picture and previous knowledge in understanding a text in an unknown foreign language. The results showed a regular positive correlation between having background knowledge (in this case, if a participant of the study was familiar with the film mentioned in the article) and text comprehension. The finding of a low-performing student, who understood the text even without using specific reading strategies relying only on cultural background and previous knowledge, calls for further investigation of the role that language world picture and cultural awareness play in understanding texts in a foreign language that is unknown to learners.

To sum up, even students with some experience in learning a foreign language need special training in acquiring reading strategies that promote understanding of the text. Most of these strategies are based on the reader's background cultural knowledge and previously acquired experience in learning foreign languages.

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