

THESIS BOOKLET

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**READING ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES:
THE READING PROCESSES OF FIRST-YEAR EFL
LEARNER BA STUDENTS**

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1 Introduction

Effective reading comprehension is undeniably an indispensable skill in everyday life. Being able to successfully comprehend information is essential in every domain of modern society, from being able to read and understand the news, to fully comprehending a legally binding document. According to the RAND Reading Study Group (2002), reading comprehension can be defined as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (p. 11). This definition shows that the understanding of a text goes beyond simply recognising letters and combining them into words; it also necessitates an active meaning construction on the part of the reader. To be able to fully comprehend the layers of meaning presented in a text, the reader has to engage into deep reading processes such as activating background knowledge, making inferences, and critically assessing the content (Grabe, 2009).

The relevance of good reading comprehension skills is especially important in the domain of tertiary education. During their university studies, students are constantly exposed to integrative tasks (e.g., listening-into-writing tasks, such as note taking at lectures, or reading-into-writing tasks, such as source-based essay writing) while acquiring declarative knowledge, note taking, summarizing, and synthesizing skills are essential, and each requires excellent information processing abilities. The need for these abilities is also confirmed by high-stakes international academic examinations, such as IELTS, Pearson Academic or TOEFL, which effectively function as entrance examinations to higher education, and which all include tasks that measure the candidate’s levels of information comprehension skills (IELTS, n.d.; Pearson PTE, n.d.; TOEFL iBT, n.d.). Therefore, it is of high importance to make the development of reading skills one of the priorities of first language (L1) and second language (L2) courses in all teaching contexts.

Investigating reading comprehension skills is especially relevant in the Hungarian context as Hungarian students appear to continuously underperform on the reading component of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test compared to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average (OECD, 2015). In the Hungarian context, learning how to read in L1 is a core part of the first-grade elementary school material. Furthermore, learning how to read effectively and receiving information on how to use reading strategies both in the L1 and L2 contexts are parts of every student's high school education.

Nevertheless, teaching and research practice suggests that most first-year EFL learner English major BA students in Hungary struggle with tasks requiring good L1 or L2 reading comprehension skills even after they have successfully taken their final school leaving examinations. The pilot studies leading up to the present dissertation (Szűcs, 2017; Szűcs & Kövér, 2016) suggest that students at the beginning of their university studies either do not use a wide enough variety of reading strategies, or they do not use reading strategies consciously enough to be able to effectively and efficiently solve the more complex integrated tasks required regularly during their studies.

Therefore, the present dissertation explores what first-year EFL learner English major BA students do when they have to read for specific purposes in the academic context, and how they process information before and after receiving explicit instruction on reading strategy use. Even though reading comprehension and the cognitive processes underlying it are by far not under-researched areas (Goodman, 1967; Gough, 1972; Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989; Urquhart & Weir, 1998), the topic has not been widely researched in connection with L2 academic reading in the proposed context of Hungarian tertiary education.

2 Theoretical background

Reading comprehension is a complex process which has been investigated from several different perspectives. The present dissertation focuses on the reading processes of fluent readers, fluent reading being defined as “multiple tasks being performed at the same time, such as decoding the words, comprehending the information, relating the information to prior knowledge of the subject matter, making inferences, and evaluating the information’s usefulness to a report [the reader is] writing” (Samuels & Flor, 1997, p. 107). As there are several different approaches to defining reading comprehension, the present dissertation accepts the definition proposed by the RAND Reading Study Group (2002), which defined reading comprehension as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (p. 11). This definition was favoured over other available definitions because it presents reading comprehension as an active meaning making process, where the reader is constantly interacting with the text.

Reading comprehension is the result of the interaction of different higher-level and lower-level processes (Grabe & Stoller, 2013). According to Grabe and Stoller (2013), the lower-level processes are word recognition, syntactic parsing, and semantic proposition formation; whereas higher-level processes are the text model of comprehension, the situation model of reader interpretation, background knowledge use and inferencing, and executive control processes. Of these, word recognition, syntactic parsing, and semantic proposition formation are considered to be lower-level processes, and they are usually automatically carried out by fluent readers without requiring any conscious attention most of the time. Because of this, the reader usually finds it difficult to reflect on these processes. Higher-level processes can also occur in an automatized way when there are no comprehension difficulties, but they are more easily accessible for conscious examination,

and they are more easily monitored and manipulated by the reader than lower-level comprehension processes (Grabe & Stoller, 2013).

Reading comprehension is influenced by several factors, one of these being the reading purpose. People can read for different purposes depending on the context of the activity. The present dissertation is concerned with the reading comprehension processes of first-year university students, so the main type of reading purpose examined here is reading for academic purposes. Reading for academic purposes is defined as reading in order to understand the content and the language of a text for the purpose of such academic activities as knowledge acquisition, academic writing, or giving a presentation in a classroom setting. The aim of academic reading, therefore, is to collect facts and data, and evidence, and to understand theories, ideas, and viewpoints, and it includes reading any type of text in the academic context (Jordan, 1997). Researchers created several different taxonomies of reading purposes (e.g., Carver, 2000; Grabe, 2009; Linderholm & van den Broek, 2002; Weir, 1993), however, as Grabe's (2009) taxonomy of six major reading purposes was developed specifically for the academic context, the present dissertation study adopted this as its theoretical underpinnings. According to Grabe (2009), these six major reading purposes are (1) reading to search for information, (2) reading for quick understanding, (3) reading to learn, (4) reading to integrate information, (5) reading to evaluate, critique, and use information, and (6) reading for general comprehension. The fact that different reading situations require different types of comprehension processes has also been supported by research evidence (e.g., Linderholm & van den Broek, 2002; Lorch, Lorch & Kluzewitz, 1993).

Other factors influencing reading comprehension are the context and the reader's background knowledge. According to Grabe (2009), the context can help a reader build the text model of comprehension and the situation model of interpretation, adjust the reading

goals, monitor the comprehension processes, relate new ideas to the background knowledge, and choose the contextually appropriate meaning of a word. Similarly, the readers' background knowledge can also have a substantial influence on the reading process. For instance, having some domain specific background knowledge or familiarity with the cultural background can aid the reader in understanding a text (Alderson, 2000; Floyd & Carrell, 1987; Hudson, 2007; Johnson, 1981; Steffenson, Joagh-Dev & Anderson, 1979). However, background knowledge can also have a negative influence on the reading process if poor readers activate inappropriate background knowledge and make wrong inferences about the text (Rapp et al., 2007).

Some researchers proposed that the constant technological development has also influenced the way people read and comprehend texts. Research suggests (e.g., Ackerman & Goldsmith, 2011; Baron, 2017; Dyson & Haselgrove, 2000; Schugar, Schugar & Penny, 2011) that the reading material gradually transferring from a paper-based platform to an on-screen platform has a notable effect on reading comprehension. According to Schugar, Schugar and Penny (2011), reading on a digital platform encourages the use of different strategies than a paper-based platform. Furthermore, when reading a digital document, Kaufman and Flanagan (2016) suggest that readers tend to focus more on scanning for key words and finding the desired information as fast as possible, so they are more readily able to answer concrete questions related to the reading material. Even though scanning for key terms is useful for quickly finding particular information in a text, it also results in a shallower understanding. In such a situation, the readers are able to understand fewer details, and they can make fewer connections between the ideas presented. Without paying enough attention to a text to activate background knowledge, make inferences, and critically assess the relevance and truth-value of the presented information, the understanding of the different layers of meaning is impossible (Kaufman & Flanagan, 2016). In many reading contexts,

the ability to quickly find information is essential, especially in the fast-paced society of today. However, in situations when the information content of a text has to be fully understood and learnt, deep reading is inevitable. Furthermore, because of the information overload created by the Internet and the increasing amount of print sources, being able to distinguish between pieces of information based on their relevance and credibility is essential, which necessitates the use of a wider variety of reading strategies and a more complex reading process (e.g., Ozgungor & Guthrie, 2004; Phakiti, 2003; Trabasso & Bouchard, 2002).

The extent to which reading strategies are used consciously is also generally believed to have an influence on reading comprehension. Reading strategies are “abilities that are potentially open to conscious reflection and reflect a reader’s intention to address a problem or a specific goal while reading” (Grabe & Stoller, 2013, p. 10). According to Grabe (2009), eight effective, empirically supported reading comprehension strategies can be distilled from the approximately five decades of reading strategy research. These strategies are the following: (1) summarising, (2) forming questions, (3) answering questions, (4) activating prior knowledge, (5) monitoring comprehension, (6) using text-structure awareness, (7) using visual graphics and graphic organisers, and (8) inferencing. Research suggests that explicit instruction is necessary for the efficient development of reading strategies both in the L1 and the L2 context (Macaro & Erlar, 2008; Olson, 2003; Olson & Land, 2007; Pressley et al., 2006). For this reason, the present dissertation study also investigates the effectiveness of explicit instructions in reading strategy use.

3 Methods

3.1 The research problem

The aim of this dissertation is to explore how students process information when they have to read for academic purposes. Therefore, the present exploratory study investigates

the reading processes and followed the skill development of 14 students participating in an academic skills course at a major Hungarian university during the autumn semester of the 2017-2018 academic year. It intends to answer the following main research question:

- **How do first-year EFL learner BA students process written academic texts?**

This study attempts to find answers to this main research question using the following sub-research questions:

1. What characterizes the reading processes of first-year students before receiving explicit training in academic reading strategies?
2. What characterizes the reading processes of first-year students after having received explicit training in academic reading strategies?
3. What propositions are included in the final guided summaries of first-year students before receiving explicit training in academic reading strategies?
4. What propositions are included in the final guided summaries of first-year students after having received explicit training in academic reading strategies?
5. Does the language proficiency level of the participants influence the efficiency of their reading processes in terms of identifying and including content points in their guided summaries before receiving explicit training in academic reading strategies? If yes, how?
6. Does the language proficiency level of the participants influence the efficiency of their reading processes in terms of identifying and including content points in their guided summaries after having received explicit training in academic reading strategies? If yes, how?

3.2 Data collection

The present dissertation study was conducted during the course of a school semester at a major Hungarian university with the participation of 14 first-year English major Hungarian BA students of the same compulsory academic skills class. The participants of the present study were all members of the same academic skills course group taught by the author of the dissertation herself. The course took place in the autumn semester of the 2017-2018 academic year, and it lasted from the beginning of the second week of September until the end of the second week of December.

The data collection was carried out in three phases: (1) in the preparatory phase, which took place in the summer of 2017, the data collection instruments were developed

and piloted; (2) in the first data collection phase, the participants were asked to execute a guided summarisation task while performing a think-aloud on their task solving processes, and when they finished, they were asked about their educational background; (3) in the second data collection phase, the participants were asked to solve another guided summary task while performing a think-aloud on their task solving processes, and this was followed by a semi-structured interview about the participants' reflection on the academic skills course and on their reading skill development. The preparatory first data collection phase took place during the first weeks of the autumn semester of the 2017-2018 academic year, and the second data collection phase took place at the end of the same semester. The data analysis focused on the content analysis of the think-aloud procedures and semi-structured interviews and on the propositional analysis of the summaries produced by the participants during the think-aloud procedures. The three phases of data collection are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

The Data Collection Phases of the Present Study

Phases of the study	Data collection procedures	Participants
<i>Preparatory phase</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the development of two guided summarisation tasks the pilot of the two guided summarisation tasks the development of two think-aloud demonstration tasks and four think-aloud practice tasks the pilot of the think-aloud demonstration and practice tasks 	three advanced users of English and two English learners preparing for a B2 level language examination
<i>First Phase</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the administration of a placement test to the participants training the participants for the think-aloud method each participant executing the guided summarisation task while performing think-aloud on it semi-structured interview with each participant about their educational background 	14 first-year English major BA students attending the academic skills course taught by the researcher
<i>Second phase</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> short think-aloud training to refresh the memories of the participants each participant executing the guided summarisation task while performing think-aloud on it semi-structured interview with each participant about the possible changes in their reading strategy use compared to the first data collection phase 	14 first-year English major BA students attending the academic skills course taught by the researcher

3.2.1 Participants

All the participants of the present study were selected on a voluntary basis, and in order to protect their identity they are mentioned under pseudonyms. The preparatory phase had altogether five participants. The guided summarisation tasks were piloted with Bella,

Erika, and Alfonz, who were all advanced speakers of English, and they had considerable experience with reading academic texts in English and finding specific information in a text. Reading academic texts was also a task which all three participants encountered every day in their work because Bella was a third year English major BA student, Erika was a high-school English teacher, and Alfonz was a fellow researcher and PhD student who had experience with professional writing and teaching academic skills.

The think-aloud demonstration and practice tasks developed for the later phases of the data collection were piloted with two members from the population. Emilia and Sarolta were two high school students beginning their 12th grade studies in 2017 September, and they were private students of the researcher preparing for a B2 level language examination.

The first and the second data collection phase had 14 participants (12 females and 2 males) who were first-year English major BA students at a major Hungarian university. At the beginning of the data collection, they were starting the first semester of their university studies, and they were between the ages of 18-24. Their biographical data is summarised in Table 2. As the table shows, the participants' proficiency of English varied, and all of them had been learning English for at least four years.

Table 2

Participants' Profiles

Name	Age	Proficiency	Oxford placement test score (/200)	Reading test score (/14)	Has learnt English for (in years)
<i>Panni</i>	18	A2	110	3	12
<i>Emma</i>	20	B1	134	3	13
<i>Ibolya</i>	19	B2	135	5	8
<i>Ádám</i>	19	B2	138	9	5
<i>Anita</i>	19	B2	140	10	10
<i>Dia</i>	19	B2	143	3	8
<i>Lilla</i>	20	B2	144	8	12
<i>Johanna</i>	19	B2	145	12	10
<i>Boglárka</i>	19	C1	154	5	10
<i>Pálma</i>	22	C1	155	7	16
<i>Tamás</i>	24	C1	164	7	11
<i>Beáta</i>	20	C1	166	9	6
<i>Judit</i>	19	C2	172	12	12
<i>Adél</i>	19	C2	175	9	12

3.2.2 Data collection instruments in the first and second phase**3.2.2.1 The Oxford placement test and the IELTS academic reading task**

Given that Research Questions 5 and 6 of the present study refer to the possible effects of language proficiency on reading comprehension skills, the language proficiency levels of the participants had to be assessed at the beginning of the data collection. For this reason, as part of the first academic skills class of the semester, a 2004 version of the Oxford placement test was administered to the participants. The test had two parts: a listening and a grammar part. The tests were corrected based on the official key, and the results were interpreted based on the appendix of the placement test. This test was selected for two reasons: firstly, because besides being a validated and reliable test, its results were also calibrated onto the Common European Framework; and secondly, because the set of items, the official key, and the official documentation for the interpretation of the results were all available for the researcher.

As the Oxford placement test did not contain any sections measuring specifically reading comprehension, an IELTS academic reading test task was added to the placement test. This step was necessary because reading comprehension is the topic of the present study. The IELTS academic reading task was specifically chosen because it was designed for assessing the academic reading competence of students who wish to study in English in tertiary education. Administering the full reading component of an IELTS academic test would have taken 60 minutes, so administering it together with the placement text was not feasible in the context of the 90-minute long class, and spending one more occasion on administering the full reading test would have taken away too much time from the course material. For this reason, one single reading task was chosen from the IELTS academic examination's publicly available practice tasks (IELTS Mentor, 2017). The language proficiency levels of the students were calculated based on their Oxford placement test results only because the reading test was originally not part of the placement test. The reading test results were used as additional information about the initial reading comprehension skills of the participants.

3.2.2.2 The think-aloud demonstration tasks and practice tasks

In order to avoid any possible influence on the way participants approach the data collection task, summarisation tasks were not used either for demonstration or for practice purposes during the think-aloud training. In the first phase, an arithmetic task was used to present the think-aloud method. In this arithmetic problem the task was to make four litres of water with the help of a five-litre and a three-litre jug. In the second phase, the demonstration task was a short, 61-word long reading task. The reading was about the first ladies' latest project in the White House, and there was one item which had to be answered based on the text.

Both in the first phase and the second phase, jumbled sentences were used as practice opportunities for the participants. The jumbled sentences were chosen as practice tasks because they appeared to be less intimidating and more closely related to the studies of English major students than arithmetic problems. The whole think-aloud training process took approximately 15 minutes in the case of each participant. However, initially there was no time limit put on the training session, and it was only finished when the participants felt completely comfortable with using the method.

3.3.5.3 The guided summarisation tasks

The guided summarisation tasks were chosen to be the main data collection instruments in the present study because they can be successfully used to assess the reading comprehension skills of the participants. A summary can be defined as “a superordinate term for a number of discourse types which have in common these relationships with the original: (1) being shortened versions, (2) including only the main ideas, and (in most cases) (3) retaining the original organisation and focus” (Johns, 1988, p. 79). Summaries can be categorised based on several different criteria, one of these criteria being how the source text is processed. Depending on this criterion, global summaries and guided summaries can be distinguished. According to Tankó (2019), the main difference between global summaries and guided summaries is that global summaries have to contain “all the main ideas from a source and cover them in a balanced manner” (p. 45), whereas guided summaries should contain “only those ideas that are relevant to [the intended] purposes while ignoring the rest” (p. 45). According to Rose (2001), summarisation tasks require the reader to actively engage with the source text through re-organising and reflecting on the presented ideas. The reader has to critically assess the information presented in the source text and consciously decide about their relevance to the reading goal (Rose, 2001). Therefore, summarisation tasks can provide an insight into the reading comprehension skills of the reader. Guided

summarisation tasks were selected over global summarisation tasks because the ideas relevant to the reading goal often do not coincide with the main ideas of the paragraphs, so they can provide a better picture about the participants' understanding of the source text.

As the first step in the task development, two academic reading texts of similar difficulty were chosen. Besides the difficulty of the text, the topic was also taken into consideration. Both texts were chosen because they discuss topics that first-year BA students can be familiar with or can encounter during their studies. The topic of the input text in Task A was investigating how children speak and understand their native language; whereas the topic of the input text in Task B was about the suffragette movement. Both texts used simple academic language free of highly specialised terminology.

To ensure that the texts required approximately the same language proficiency levels and reading proficiency levels to understand, the difficulty and complexity of the texts was analysed with the help of readability formulas. As Table 3 shows, the results of the calculations executed with the different readability indices are not exactly the same for the two texts; however, the final scores calculated based on the eight different readability indices are close. The readability indices indicate that both texts are approximately on college level difficulty, fit for the participants of this dissertation study. Even though Task A has a slightly lower readability index, it discusses a topic that might potentially be less familiar for the students than the topic of task B. On the other hand, Task B discusses a topic with which some participants might be familiar, but the complexity of the text is slightly higher. However, the readability scores suggest that both texts are appropriate for college-level readers.

Table 3

Readability Indices of the Text of Task A and that of Task B

Readability index	Investigating Children's Language (Text of task A)	Votes for Women (Text of task B)
<i>Flesch Reading Ease score</i>	40.9	43.1
<i>Gunning Fog</i>	16.7	16.4
<i>Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level</i>	13.2	13.8
<i>The Coleman-Liau Index</i>	12	12
<i>The SMOG Index</i>	12	12
<i>Automated Readability Index</i>	13.9	15.4
<i>Linsear Write Formula</i>	15.6	17.6
<i>Readability Consensus</i>	13	14

Besides the topic and the complexity of the texts, other characteristics, such as length and text type were also considered. It was crucial that the chosen texts were academic expository texts designed for reading for academic purposes because the research aim of the present study was to examine the academic reading processes of students in an academic context. It was also important that the texts are approximately 700-750 words long. They had to be sufficiently informative but also short enough to comfortably fit into the one-hour long data collection procedure. The use of longer texts was also dismissed to be able to exclude the possible effects of fatigue induced by the combination of the cognitive challenge of performing a think-aloud and the length of the task.

After the texts were selected, the two guided summarisation tasks had to be designed. To do so, the edited and finalised texts were subjected to propositional analysis based on the guidelines described by Bovair and Kieras (1985). Based on the results of the propositional analysis, it was decided that the guiding prompt for Task A would be *'the difficulties of collecting data from children'* and for Task B *'the ways in which the suffragettes managed to promote their movement'* as these were the most recurring and substantially discussed sub-topics in the texts. Furthermore, a list of possible content points (CPs) was created.

The task instruction was formulated based on the general instructions used in one of the core guided summarisation practice books used in the academic skills course attended

by the participants of this study, namely *Paraphrasing, Summarising and Synthesising Skills for Academic Writers: Theory and Practice* (Tankó, 2019). Therefore, the instruction for both tasks was formulated in the following way: *Read the passage below and write a paragraph of 130 words (+/-10%) in which you summarise in your own words as far as possible [guiding prompt], which are discussed in the reading passage below.*

3.3.5.4 Semi-structured interview schedules

Both in the first phase and the second phase think-aloud, the students participated in a semi-structured interview after finishing the think-aloud protocols. In the first phase, the first question referred to the age of the participant, and the second and the third questions asked about their language learning history. The fourth, fifth and sixth questions asked about the participants' knowledge and training in the use of reading strategies while the seventh and the eighth questions enquired about the same information regarding summarisation skills. The last question was asked to ensure that no important details related to the discussed topics were left undiscussed.

Compared to the interview schedule of the first phase, the interview schedule of the second phase was shorter because there was no need to ask about the biographical data. Here, the first two questions referred to the possible changes in the participants' reading processes and task-solving methods, whereas the third question enquired about the material of other university courses the participant took during the semester. Similarly to the first interview, the last question was asked to ensure that all the important details relevant to the topic were discussed.

The semi-structured interview schedule was chosen instead of a more rigidly structured instrument because of its flexibility, and because the aim was to catch all the nuanced details of the participants' experiences. Both in the first and the second phase, the created interview schedules were piloted and finalised during the first three interviews.

Moreover, the rest of participants were also encouraged to add any ideas that they found relevant to the topic at any point of the interview.

3.3 Data analysis

3.3.1 Analysis of the placement test data

The placement test data collected during the preliminary phase was analysed based on the instruction guide provided with the Oxford Placement Test. First, the answers of the participants were corrected based on the official key featured in the guide, and every correct answer was counted as one point. The points the participants obtained in the grammar and the listening sections of the test were added, their final scores were interpreted based on the score interpretation table in the guide, and the language proficiency levels of the participants were assessed.

Similarly to the grammar and listening sections, the answers of the participants for the reading section were corrected based on the official key provided with the test. However, as the reading test did not form part of the Oxford Placement Test, its results were not included into the assessment of the participants' language proficiency levels; they were only used as supplementary information during the analysis.

3.3.2 Analysis of the semi-structured interview data

The audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were transcribed and subjected to content analysis in order to learn about the participants' biographical data, educational background, their perceptions of the course material, and the possible changes they perceived their reading strategy use to undergo during the course of the semester.

3.3.3 Analysis of the think-aloud procedures

First, the audio-recordings of the think-aloud procedures collected during the first and second data collection phase were transcribed. After transcribing the think-aloud

protocols, the transcripts were subjected to content analysis, and emerging themes were searched for. The analysis was focusing on the reading processes of the participants and their use of reading strategies while solving the guided summarisation task. In the coding of the emerging themes, the constant comparative method (Maykut & Morehouse, 2002) was used. The initial coding scheme was created with the help of a co-coder, and it was based on the coding scheme used in Szűcs and Kövér (2016), on Urquhart and Weir's (1998) taxonomy of reading types, on Grabe's (2009) list of empirically supported reading strategies, and on Grabe's (2009) strategies used for monitoring reading comprehension. As the present research study focused on reading in the academic context, Grabe's (2009) taxonomy of reading purposes in the academic context was also taken into consideration. The coding scheme was created based on the combination of these taxonomies, and it was modified and improved in accordance with the emerging themes in the data.

The coding was done manually, and to ensure its reliability, 50% of the think-aloud protocols (i.e., seven think-aloud protocol from the first data collection phase, and seven think-aloud protocols from the second data collection phase) were also coded by a co-coder. The co-coder was a fellow researcher who had considerable experience with coding qualitative data, and he also had previous knowledge about the topic of reading processes and reading strategy use. The 50% of the data was selected to ensure that the co-coder coded at least one protocol from each language proficiency level from both data collection phases. The results of the co-coding were entered into SPSS 22.0, and Cohen's Kappa was calculated to assess the inter-coder reliability. The results suggested a substantial agreement because $\kappa = 0.82$ ($p < 0.001$).

3.3.4 Analysis of the guided summaries

In order to be able to answer Research Questions 3 and 4, the final guided summaries produced by the participants in the first and the second data collection phase were subjected

to propositional analysis along with the source texts used in the two data collection tasks. The method of propositional analysis was chosen because of its potential to provide a formal representation of the semantic content of a text, and because it allows for the analysis and evaluation of reading comprehension performance (Bovair & Kieras, 1985). It can provide a more objective base for deciding what content from the source texts is represented in the guided summaries of the participants than simply just relying on the subjective intuition of the researcher. Bovair and Kieras's (1985) approach was chosen over the other viable methods of propositional analysis because of the detailed explanation of the guidelines of the analysis and because the system of analysis was developed for analysing and scoring source text recall, which could be easily adapted to the needs of the present study.

As the first step of the analysis, the source texts and the guided summaries were broken down into their propositional content. During this process, the propositional analysis guidelines of Bovair and Kieras (1985) were followed without modification. The propositional analysis of the source texts and the guided summaries was done manually and by the researcher alone. When it was finished, it was sent to the supervisor of this dissertation for expert check, and the propositional content of the source texts and the summaries was finalised based on that feedback.

As the second step of the analysis, the propositional content of the two source texts and the propositional content of the participants' guided summaries were compared and contrasted. During the analysis, two aspects of the summaries were investigated: firstly, the amount of the task-relevant propositional content included in the participants' guided summaries; and secondly, whether the task-irrelevant propositional content of the summaries could be categorised as irrelevant information or added information. Based on Tankó (2017), the present dissertation defines irrelevant information as a piece of information included into the summary of a participant which is present in the source text

of the summarisation task, but it is not relevant from the point of view of the task instruction, and added information as “ideas not present in the source text, such as the test taker’s personal contributions in the form of opinions, interpretations, analyses” (p. 3).

The reproduction of the task-relevant propositional content was scored based on the guidelines provided by Bovair and Kieras (1985). A version of liberal scoring described by Bovair and Kieras (1985) was applied because of its flexibility. As liberal scoring can be rather subjective, a co-coder was used in the process of deciding whether a piece of propositional content can be considered as reproduction of the task-relevant propositions of the source text. The co-coder was a fellow researcher experienced in text analysis. Before the data analysis, the co-coder was trained in the method of propositional analysis by the researcher. Then the researcher and the co-coder analysed the degree of reproduction of the task-relevant propositional content, and they categorised the task-irrelevant propositional content in 14 guided summaries (i.e., 7 guided summaries from the first phase, and 7 guided summaries from the second phrase) together. The scoring and the categorisations of the researcher and the co-coder were entered into SPSS 22.0 and Cohen’s Kappa was calculated to assess the inter-coder reliability of the analysis. The results suggested a substantial agreement because $\kappa = 0.78$ ($p < 0.001$).

3.4 Summary of the research design

The research questions and the data analysis procedures used to answer the research questions are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4

Summary of the Research Questions and Data Analysis Procedures

	Research question	Data source	Method of analysis
1.	What characterizes the reading processes of first-year students before receiving explicit training in academic reading strategies?	first phase think-aloud protocols and first phase semi-structured interviews	content analysis, constant comparative method
2.	What characterizes the reading processes of first-year students after having received explicit training in academic reading strategies?	second phase think-aloud protocols and second phase semi-structured interviews	content analysis, constant comparative method
3.	What propositions are included in the final guided summaries of first-year students before receiving explicit training in academic reading strategies?	source texts of the guided summarisation tasks, first phase guided summaries	propositional analysis
4.	What propositions are included in the final guided summaries of first-year students after having received explicit training in academic reading strategies?	source texts of the guided summarisation tasks, second phase guided summaries	propositional analysis
5.	Does the language proficiency level of the participants influence the efficiency of their reading processes in terms of identifying and including content points in their guided summaries before receiving explicit training in academic reading strategies? If yes, how?	placement test results, first phase think-aloud protocols, first phase guided summaries	content analysis of the first phase think-aloud protocols and propositional analysis of the first phase guided summaries contrasted with the participants' results on the baseline language proficiency test
6.	Does the language proficiency level of the participants influence the efficiency of their reading processes in terms of identifying and including content points in their guided summaries after receiving explicit training in academic reading strategies? If yes, how?	placement test results, second phase think-aloud protocols, second phase guided summaries	content analysis of the second phase think-aloud protocols and propositional analysis of the second phase guided summaries contrasted with the participants' results on the baseline language proficiency test

4 Outcomes and discussion

4.1 RQ1 and RQ2

The first two research questions of the study were the following: (1) *What characterizes the reading processes of first-year students before receiving explicit training in academic reading strategies?* and (2) *What characterizes the reading processes of first-year students after having received explicit training in academic reading strategies?* As reading strategies are defined as “abilities that are potentially open to conscious reflection and reflect a reader’s intention to address a problem or a specific goal while reading” (Grabe & Stoller, 2013, p. 10), the present dissertation study discusses the reading processes of the participants through examining their reading strategy use while solving the data collection task.

Considering their background knowledge in reading strategies at the beginning of the first data collection phase, all participants except for Ibolya, Lilla, and Judit claimed that they had not received any explicit instruction related to reading strategy use in high school or in any other formal education institution. Out of the three of them, Ibolya and Lilla said that they received some instruction on reading strategies in high school as part of their Hungarian Language and Communication course. They added that they also had to produce one-sentence oral global summaries of short texts in high school even though they did not receive any instruction regarding how summarisation should be done. The way these two participants approached the data collection task during the first phase reflects the ways they were instructed by their high school language teachers: both participants first read the task instruction and then the text carefully once to get an idea about the topic. Then, they re-read the text again and underlined the main ideas in the text. Even though initially both participants set the incorrect reading purpose of summarising all the main ideas, when re-reading the task instruction, Ibolya eventually realised that she only had to focus on the ways

the suffragettes managed to promote their movement. Nonetheless, she kept the irrelevant pieces of information in her final written product because she was instructed in high school to always create context for the information presented in a composition. This shows that even though Ibolya and Lilla both had the necessary English language proficiency level to appropriately execute the data collection task, when faced with the unfamiliar task, they transferred reading and task-solving strategies from their previous experience with L1 reading tasks. This transfer had a negative effect on their task-solving processes (cf. Grabe & Stoller, 2013).

Similarly to Ibolya and Lilla, Judit also claimed that she had received some instruction about reading strategies. In contrast with the previously discussed two participants, however, Judit received explicit reading strategy instruction not only related to L1 reading tasks in high school but also at a British language teaching institution when she prepared for her advanced level English language proficiency examination. At this institution, she had also received some limited instruction on creating short, one-sentence global summaries, and she also had to execute such tasks during her preparation for the language examination. The effect of the training was visible in her task-solving strategies because she appeared to approach the task in a more focussed and deliberate way even during the first data collection phase. Right from the beginning, she interpreted the task instruction correctly and managed to set the appropriate reading purpose for herself. Following that, she consciously planned her task execution method by claiming that she wanted to read the text twice: once carefully and once again by only focussing on finding the relevant ideas. However, regardless of the correct reading purpose, Judit also decided to include irrelevant information into her summary to create context for the presented relevant information based on the instruction related to written compositions she received in high school. This suggests that even very high language proficiency (i.e., C2 level language proficiency) and explicit

instruction about the different types of reading strategies are not enough on their own if students are not made aware of a variety of different reading goals. Without this awareness, the final written product is still an incorrect execution of the task. The need for familiarising students with several different reading goals was also proposed by Koda (2007), who claimed that in order for students to effectively improve their reading strategy use, they need to explore many different L2 reading goals. The results of the present study also seem to point towards the same direction.

Panni, Emma, Dia, and Tamás claimed that they did not receive any formal instruction in reading strategies or summarisation, but they had to do short oral or written one-sentence-long global summaries of texts in addition to solving reading tasks as a preparation for their Hungarian Language and Communication final school leaving examinations. When formulating their reading purpose, these participants claimed that they had to do a global summary of the main ideas presented in the source text in the data collection task, except for Panni, who claimed that she was required to write down her own opinion about the topic of the source text. The approach of these participants shows that when encountering the unfamiliar task type, they automatically transferred reading purposes and reading strategies from previously encountered L1 reading contexts, and they did not manage to flexibly adapt these purposes and strategies to the data collection task. This shows that even by reading the task instruction multiple times, these participants did not manage to set the task-appropriate reading purpose.

Ádám, Johanna, Boglárka, Pálma, Beáta, and Adél had no previous experience with summarisation tasks, and they claimed that they did not receive any formal explicit instruction in summarisation or reading strategy use during their high school studies. All of these participants except for Adél claimed during the first phase data collection that their task was to summarise all the main ideas from the source text of the data collection task.

Even though Adél initially managed to define the reading purpose correctly, during the task-solving process she started to also include irrelevant pieces of information because she claimed that she was taught in high school to always provide a context for her ideas in a writing task. The aforementioned approaches suggest that at the beginning of the semester, during the first data collection phase, the participants had been heavily influenced by the task-solving strategies acquired in high school, and they were applying these even when these strategies did not fit the task requirements.

During the second data collection phase, the contrast among the different participants' task-solving strategies blurred, and they all seemed to have improved the appropriateness of their strategy use regardless of their previous educational background or their first phase performance. The results suggest that even though there were still several participants who did not manage to set a fully task-appropriate reading purpose, all the participants managed to set their reading purpose more appropriately during the second data collection phase. Furthermore, the reading processes of the participants became faster, more efficient, and more focussed based on their reading purpose, as far as the data collection task is concerned.

In conclusion, it can be claimed that the ways the participants used reading strategies had changed during the course of the semester when considering the execution of the data collection task. In addition, it must be emphasised that the majority of the difficulties they encountered during the first data collection phase were not caused by the participants' lack of familiarity with reading strategies. Even those participants who claimed that they did not receive any instruction regarding the use of reading strategies at any point during their studies had a consciously applied method of solving reading tasks. During the first and the second data collection phase, the majority of the participants applied the same reading

strategies, but in the second data collection phase they applied them in a more efficient way and more appropriately tailored to the correct reading purpose.

The difficulties of setting a task appropriate reading purpose and correctly tailoring the reading strategy use to that purpose during the first data collection phase were probably caused by the fact that the participants were trained in high school to execute only one type of reading task, and they were not thought to adapt their task-solving strategies to different reading situations and reading purposes. During the first data collection phase, some participants even compared the data collection task to those reading exercises they encountered during their high school studies when preparing for the final school leaving examinations, even though, by reading the task instruction carefully, it becomes clear that the task required the participants to only focus on certain pieces of information in the text, which often did not coincide with the main ideas.

4.2 RQ3 & RQ4

Regarding Research Question 3 (i.e., *What propositions are included in the final guided summaries of first-year students before receiving explicit training in academic reading strategies?*) and Research Question 4 (i.e., *What propositions are included in the final guided summaries of first-year students after having received explicit training in academic reading strategies?*), it can be claimed that during the first data collection phase none of the participants managed to produce a task-appropriate guided summary as their final written product. However, based on the extent to which they managed to set the correct reading purpose and the degree to which they managed to recognize and include task-relevant content into their summaries during the first data collection phase, the participants can be organised into two groups. The first group contains Ibolya, Anita, Dia, Judit and Adél because they all managed to set a task-appropriate reading purpose at some point of their task-solving process. Ibolya and Dia initially defined their reading purpose as having to

include all the main ideas of the source text into their summaries, but upon further inspection of the task instruction, they both managed to set the task-appropriate reading purpose. Anita, Judit and Adél managed to set the correct reading purpose right at the beginning of the data collection. Nevertheless, the final summaries of all five of these participants contain several pieces of irrelevant and added information. Based on their think-alouds, the reason behind including the task-irrelevant pieces of information was the negative effect of transferring reading and task-solving processes from the high school context (cf. Grabe & Stoller, 2013). They all mentioned in their think-alouds that they included the task-irrelevant pieces of information in order to create a general introduction, a general conclusion, and context for the task-relevant pieces of information as according to the instruction they received in high school, every written composition should possess these features. For this reason, in their cases, the inclusion of the added and irrelevant pieces of information might be considered as a problem related to the production component of the task rather than a problem related to text processing. For example, in the case of Dia, it is obvious from the think-aloud that she was aware of the irrelevance of certain pieces of information, yet she decided to include them into the summary in order to increase its length. Judit's think-aloud also suggests that she was aware of the fact that some of the information she included into her summary was irrelevant, and she only decided to include them to create a context for the relevant pieces of information.

The second group contains Panni, Emma, Ádám, Lilla, Johanna, Boglárka, Pálma, Tamás, and Beáta, who all set the summarisation of all the main ideas of the text as their reading purpose during the first data collection phase. In contrast with the previously discussed participants, Panni, Emma, Ádám, Lilla, Johanna, Boglárka, Pálma, Tamás, and Beáta included irrelevant and added pieces of information into their summaries because of text processing problems. By setting the wrong reading purpose for their reading process,

they did not manage to extract the task-appropriate propositions from the text. Setting the wrong reading purpose can have two potential explanations: first, it might be the result of the negative effects of transferring reading purposes from previously encountered L1 reading contexts. This can be especially true in the cases of Panni, Emma, Lilla, and Tamás, who said in their think-alouds that they had to give short oral global summaries of texts in the Hungarian Language and Communication classes during their high school studies. As during the first phase, most of them explicitly likened the data collection task to reading tasks they had to execute during high school, it is likely that when they saw the word ‘summarise’ in the task instruction, they automatically transferred the reading purpose they used to set when executing summarisation tasks in high school. Research suggests that such transfer of L1 reading purposes is common, and that some amount of L1 transfer is always involved in L2 reading (Koda, 2007), and the negative effects of such transfers can be even more prominent in the cases of participants with lower language proficiency level (Grabe & Stoller, 2013).

As Ádám, Johanna, Boglárka, Pálma, and Beáta said in their think-alouds that they did not have to solve any summarisation tasks during their high school studies, another explanation for setting the wrong reading purpose despite reading the task instructions multiple times can be shallow processing. Research (e.g., Ackerman & Goldsmith, 2011; Dyson & Haselgrove, 2000; Schugar, Schugar & Penny, 2011) suggests that the technological development of today’s world has had a notable impact on people’s reading habits, and that the gradual transfer of reading material from a paper-based platform to an on-screen platform (Baron, 2017) has resulted in a change in reading strategy use. According to Schugar, Schugar and Penny (2011), reading on a digital platform facilitates the use of scanning more readily than the use of careful reading, which results in a shallower understanding of a text. These changes seem to be especially prevalent in the case of the

members of generation Z (Strauss & Howe, 1997), who are more exposed to reading on a digital platform from a young age than the members of older generations. Despite the fact that the participants of the present study had to solve the data collection task in a paper-based format, as members of generation Z, it can be assumed that they are exposed to reading on a digital platform on a daily basis. It can be hypothesised that this exposure could have had an effect on the reading habits of the participants, and for this reason their processing of written material became shallower and more focused on finding keywords only. Such an attitude could have led to a shallow processing of the task instruction, thus resulting in setting an incorrect reading purpose.

The results of the present study show that in the second phase many of the participants managed to include the task-relevant propositional content into their guided summaries more appropriately than during the first phase. Panni, Ádám, Dia, Johanna, Boglárka, Beáta, and Judit all reproduced notably more task-relevant propositions in their summaries during the second data collection phase. It is worth mentioning that all of these participants except for Judit worked with the *Investigating Children's Language* text during the first data collection phase and the *Votes for Women* text in the second data collection phase. It is possible that their improvement in the reproduction of propositional content was also influenced by the input text, and it can be assumed that the success of the participants was at least partly caused by their more extensive background knowledge about the suffragette movements. Despite the fact that the readability indices suggested that the *Investigating Children's Language* text was less difficult than the *Votes for Women* one, it might be possible that the participants' lack of background knowledge on and experience with research negatively influenced their capabilities to appropriately comprehend the source text. This idea also seems to be supported by the results of Ibolya and Lilla, who managed to reproduce notably more task-relevant propositions in the first data collection

phase, when they were working with the *Votes for Women* text, compared to the second data collection phase, when they were working with the *Investigating Children's Language* text.

There were also participants who could serve as counter-examples to the previously presented phenomenon. For instance, Emma, Pálma, and Tamás, who worked with the *Votes for Women* text during the first phase and the *Investigating Children's Language* text in the second phase, managed to reproduce almost the same amount of task-relevant propositional content during both phases. This may suggest that the improvement of their reading comprehension and summarisation skills could probably counteract the possible comprehension difficulties emerging from the lack of content related background knowledge. Similarly, Adél and Anita reproduced about the same amount of task-relevant propositional content during both phases, even though they worked with the *Investigating Children's Language* text during the first phase and the *Votes for Women* text in the second phase. Based on their think-aloud protocols, it can be assumed that they did not have more content related background knowledge in either of the topics than the other participants, so other factors must have been influencing their results. For instance, it can be assumed that just as the readability indices suggested, Adél and Anita perceived the *Investigating Children's Language* text easier to understand despite its topic.

Regarding the amount of irrelevant and added information included into the summaries, a positive change can be observed in the case of most participants. However, it must be emphasised that participants still included added and irrelevant pieces of information into their summaries produced in the second data collection phase. In these cases, the presence of these added pieces of information can be explained by the participants' difficulties of distinguishing between the information actually presented in the text, and their own assumptions based on such information. In some of the cases (e.g., Tamás' second phase summary and Adél's first phase summary), the added information can be traced back

to a wrongly applied generalisation rule (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978). As the generalisation rule entails the utilisation of a higher-level cognitive processing, its correct application requires an extensive amount of practice (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978). The fact that most participants managed to include less added information into their summaries during the second data collection phase suggests that with further practice, the participants' ability to avoid the inclusion of added information into their summaries eventually improves.

The presence of the irrelevant pieces of information in the summaries produced during the second data collection phase might have two possible explanations: on the one hand, it can be caused by the lack of background knowledge in the topic of the source text, which could lead to the setting of an incorrect reading purpose. For instance, Adél considered the financial aspect of supporting the movement as part of the promotion techniques of the suffragettes, which points to her lack of familiarity with the concept of 'promotion'. Another example illustrating the wrong reading purpose being set because of lack of background knowledge is Ibolya's second summary, which contains information not only about the difficulties of collecting data from children, but also about the difficulties of data analysis. This was probably the result of Ibolya's lack of background knowledge in conducting research. According to Koda (2007), being able to link the information presented in the text to their own background knowledge can greatly help L2 readers in setting the appropriate reading goal and choosing the appropriate reading strategies for L2 reading task execution. Another possible explanation for the inclusion of irrelevant pieces of information can be the participants' inability to correctly apply the deletion rule while evaluating the relevance of certain pieces of information (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978). It can be assumed that the participants sometimes could not judge effectively whether a piece of information was relevant to the reading purpose or not. This could also explain why no participants managed to reproduce more than the 40% of the task-relevant propositions in either of the

data collection phases. The fact that during the second data collection phase the participants still had difficulties with judging the relevance of source text information suggests that the development and improvement of the ability to make a distinction between relevant and irrelevant information should be more heavily emphasised during their education.

4.3 RQ5 & RQ6

The aim of Research Question 5 (i.e., *Does the language proficiency level of the participants influence the efficiency of their reading processes in terms of identifying and including content points in their guided summaries before receiving explicit training in academic reading strategies? If yes, how?*) and Research Question 6 (i.e., *Does the language proficiency level of the participants influence the efficiency of their reading processes in terms of identifying and including content points in their guided summaries after having received explicit training in academic reading strategies? If yes, how?*) was to investigate the effect of the participants' initial language proficiency level on the efficiency of their reading processes. Based on the results of the present dissertation study, the initial language proficiency levels of the participants did not seem to have a distinctive effect on their efficiency of including task-relevant propositions into their summaries neither in the first, nor in the second data collection phase. During the first data collection phase, Tamás, one of the C1 language proficiency level participants, managed to reproduce most of the task-relevant propositional content out of the participants who were working with the *Votes for Women* text, but Emma, the B1 level participant, reproduced almost as much as him. Regarding those who worked with the *Investigating Children's Language* text in the first phase, Adél, the C2 level participant, reproduced the most task-relevant propositional content, but Anita, a B2 level participant, reproduced almost exactly the same amount. In the case of the second data collection phase, the results of the participants seemed to be even less influenced by their language proficiency levels because there are examples of both

positive and negative changes in the amount of task-relevant pieces of information included into the summaries for every proficiency level (cf. Table 5).

Table 5

Summary of the Propositional Analysis and the Language Proficiency Levels of the Participants

Name	Number of propositions found in the first phase (/53)	Percentage of propositions found in the first phase (/100)	Number of propositions found in the second phase (/53)	Percentage of propositions found in the second phase (/100)	Language proficiency level
<i>Panni</i>	1	1.89	16	30.18	A2
<i>Emma</i>	10	18.87	11	20.75	B1
<i>Ibolya</i>	8	15.09	2	3.77	B2
<i>Ádám</i>	4	7.55	14	26.42	B2
<i>Anita</i>	12	22.64	10	18.87	B2
<i>Dia</i>	7	13.21	14	26.42	B2
<i>Lilla</i>	5	9.43	2	3.77	B2
<i>Johanna</i>	0	0	16	30.19	B2
<i>Boglárka</i>	10	18.87	13	24.53	C1
<i>Pálma</i>	12	22.64	10	18.87	C1
<i>Tamás</i>	14	26.42	14	26.42	C1
<i>Beáta</i>	0	0	12	22.64	C1
<i>Judit</i>	8	15.09	19	35.85	C2
<i>Adél</i>	13	24.53	10	18.87	C2

Regarding the way participants managed to correctly identify the task-appropriate reading purpose, language proficiency did not seem to have a notable influence neither in the first data collection phase nor in the second data collection phase. Even though in the first data collection phase there were five participants, namely Ibolya (B2), Anita (B2), Dia (B2), Judit (C2), and Adél (C2) who managed to identify the correct reading purpose, they did not manage to create a task-appropriate summary as a final product. Moreover, the rest of the participants, regardless of their language proficiency levels, all identified an incorrect reading purpose for their task solving processes. This indicates that the effects of negative transfer of reading goals and strategies from previously encountered reading tasks (Grabe & Stoller, 2013) could be observed in the cases of all participants, and the success of the transfer did not seem to be influenced by the language proficiency level of the participants.

This finding is somewhat in opposition with the suggestions that transfer is more likely to cause interferences on lower language proficiency levels than on higher language proficiency levels (Grabe & Stoller, 2013). In the present sample, it can be argued that Ibolya, Anita, Dia, Judit, and Adél executed the reading comprehension part of the data collection task with the right reading purpose in mind, and they only added the irrelevant pieces of information because of the writing related instructions they received during their high school studies, thus the addition of the irrelevant information is a production related problem rather than a reception related one. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that their moderate to high language proficiency levels were not enough to help them properly solve an unfamiliar task type, even in the cases of Judit and Adél, who had C2 level English language proficiency.

In connection with setting the appropriate reading purpose, language proficiency did not seem to play a distinctive role during the second data collection phase either. In general, all the participants managed to create more task-appropriate final written products than in the first data collection phase. Nevertheless, most participants did not work with a fully task-appropriate reading purpose in mind. Ibolya, Pálma, Tamás, and Judit although managed to identify that their summaries had to focus on the difficulties of collecting data from children, they also included information related to other aspects of the text, such as the difficulties related to data analysis or the characteristics of different research paradigms. Similarly, Anita, Johanna, Boglárka, Beáta, and Adél correctly identified that the summary should focus on the ways the suffragettes managed to promote their movement; however, they also included information about the suffragettes' money making opportunities into their final written product. This shows that despite their different language proficiency levels, several participants still struggled with setting the task-appropriate reading purpose during the second data collection phase.

In conclusion, based on the results of the present study, it can be argued that regardless of their language proficiency levels, first year university students can greatly benefit from explicit instruction in reading strategies because when they meet unfamiliar tasks, high language proficiency alone does not seem to be able to compensate for the lack of familiarity with the task type. The results of the present study suggest that the negative effects of transferring reading goals and reading strategies from previous L1 experience can be counteracted by familiarising students with many different reading goals and task types in order for them to develop more appropriate reading strategies for L2 reading task execution. This idea is also in line with the suggestions of Koda (2007).

5 Conclusions

Reading comprehension is a highly intricate process which necessitates the combined interaction of several complex cognitive processes. Being able to extract meaning from a text requires a deep engagement with the reading material, and it involves the activation of background knowledge and inferencing skills (Grabe, 2009).

Because having appropriate reading skills is indispensable in the academic context, gaining a deeper insight into the reading processes of young adults and devising appropriate reading strategy training methods is imminent. In the Hungarian context, reassessing the way reading comprehension is taught and practiced is especially important because Hungarian students appear to continuously underperform on the reading component of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test compared to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average (OECD, 2015). The findings of a previously conducted study with first-year English major BA students (Szűcs, 2017) also support the assumption that Hungarian students struggle with reading comprehension, even though reading strategies are part of the high school curriculum (Oktatási Hivatal, 2017). As students in higher education are constantly exposed to tasks requiring good reading comprehension skills, this problem needs to be addressed.

As the topic of the reading processes of first-year Hungarian university and college students is not a widely researched topic, the aim of the present study was to explore how students process information when they have to read for academic purposes. For this reason, the reading processes and reading skill development of 14 first-year English major BA students was examined. The students were all Hungarian native speakers studying at the same Hungarian university, and they all participated in the same academic skills course during the autumn semester of the 2017-2018 academic year. The participants' language

proficiency levels ranged from A2 to C2 level, and they all had been learning English for at least four years.

The results of the analysis suggest that during the first phase of the data collection the majority of the participants approached the data collection task with inappropriate reading purposes in mind, which was probably the result of transferring L1 reading goals and reading strategies they successfully used during their high school studies. Setting the wrong reading purpose misguided the reading process, and the participants did not manage to create a task-appropriate summary as their final written product. Even in the cases of those participants who initially managed to set the correct reading purpose, transferring the L1 reading-into-writing task solving strategies they had learnt during high school had a negative impact on their task solving processes. During the second data collection phase, the participants were able to set their reading purposes more appropriately, and they could utilize their task solving strategies and reading strategies in a more flexible, adaptable, and efficient way.

Regarding the amount of relevant propositional content included into participants' guided summaries, it can be concluded that the majority of the participants managed to select the relevant pieces of information more appropriately during the second phase than in the first phase. This was probably caused by their ability to set more task-appropriate reading purposes. The presence of the relevant pieces of information in the guided summaries written in the second phase probably points towards a more complex underlying problem, namely, that the participants need further practice in order to be able to appropriately judge the relevance of information presented in a text. Regarding the effect of the initial language proficiency levels on the ability to include task-relevant pieces of information into a text, there seems to be no observable definitive influence or pattern.

As any research endeavour, the present dissertation study also has its limitations. Firstly, the present study only investigates the reading processes of the participants with the help of one single task type, and the data was collected only on two occasions. Investigating the reading comprehension processes of the same population by collecting data at more data collection points (e.g., at the end of each week of the semester), for a longer period of time (e.g., over the course of an academic year), and with several different reading task types (e.g., fill-in the gap, multiple-choice, or multiple matching tasks) could be a noteworthy future research endeavour providing even deeper insights into the reading processes of the investigated population. Secondly, the subjective nature of the data analysis carried out with the method of propositional analysis also has to be considered. It has to be acknowledged that propositional analysis involves several decisions and interpretations depending on the subjective judgement of the researcher. These possible negative influences were attempted to be counteracted by the triangulation of the researcher: a co-coder was asked to analyse 50% of both the first and the second phase data in addition to the researcher herself, and the propositionalised source texts and guided summaries were also sent to the supervisor of this dissertation for expert feedback. Finally, the present dissertation study focussed on a small sample, and its results could be the basis for some future research projects conducted on larger sample sizes.

6 Pedagogical implications

Several findings of the study support the importance of instruction in the development of reading comprehension skills. In the present study, providing the participants explicit training in the use of reading strategies had a positive effect on the development of their reading comprehension skills. This result is in line with the findings of other researchers such as Macaro and Erler (2008), Olson (2003), Olson and Land (2007) and Pressley et al. (2006) among others. Therefore, educators working in secondary and

tertiary education institutions should consider providing explicit reading strategy instruction to their students in order to better prepare them for their studies and future careers. As this can only be executed with the help of secondary and tertiary education institutions, the awareness of these institutions should also be raised about the benefits of such instruction.

Furthermore, the findings also suggest that teaching summarisation skills to students also has a beneficial effect on their reading abilities because it teaches students to read more efficiently, and it teaches them to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant pieces of information, thus encouraging the development of their critical thinking skills. These findings are in line with the results of the study conducted by Trabasso and Bouchard (2002). In addition, the habit of formulating a guiding question at the beginning of a guided summary to establish the reading purpose can also result in more efficient text comprehension, as it has also been found by Rosenshine, Meister and Chapman (1996).

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CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- “Reading English for Academic Purposes: A Case Study on the Reading Processes of First Year EFL Learner BA Students,” EDiTE Conference, Doctoral School of Education, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary, November 21, 2017.
- “The Summary Writing Processes of First Year EFL Learner BA Students,” 25th IATEFL-Hungary Conference, Budapest, Hungary, October 9–11, 2015.
- “The motivation processes of MA in English Applied Linguistics students,” Poster Presentation, School of English and American Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary, April 28, 2015.
- “The summary writing processes of first year EFL learner BA students,” National Scientific Students’ Associations Conference (OTDK), Humanities Section, Language Pedagogy Subsection, Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest, Hungary, April 08 – 10, 2015.