



Three step method

Method & Rationale

This method lets students work in three different ways at three different levels (steps) while learning or revising a topic – or training a skill. The three levels extend from basic terminology understanding to dealing with more complex matters. The training at all three levels will be useful for all students, no matter how advanced they are.

Description

Three steps method works best in working with a given text. This might be a text for language learning, but also a text for any topic in any lesson.

We read a text aloud in the class. The students will then have the text by them while reading. When the text is read a work sheet is distributed to the students. They will then have 10 minutes to solve the first step, which is about word knowledge. The task would be to explain a number of words which appear in the text. The students do as many as they can during 10 minutes. This is Step 1.

After this all students move on to Step 2, where they answer questions on the content of the text. This phase will train text comprehension and, if the purpose is learning the content, also offer an opportunity to do that (on your own). The students answer as many questions they can in 10 minutes.

Finally, all start on Step 3, where both already existing knowledge and content from the text are used to discuss bigger matters. The purpose is to show what you really can do with your knowledge and skills.

On completion of all three steps, the results will be gone through in the class and (where necessary) corrected by the students themselves during the go-through *or* the working material could be collected and corrected/assessed by the teacher. When learning the content is the purpose, rather than training reading comprehension in general, the questions should cover most of the relevant content (to be learnt). In this case, all questions should be completed by all students when going through the answers.

Students Outcomes

- Approaching a topic or a skill from different angles gives both wider and deeper understanding
- All students can achieve something at each level – satisfying for all
- All students are active during the whole lesson – maximum learning efficiency
- Different skills are trained – useful and varied
- Slower students get a chance to work with more complex and creative exercises – not only the basic ones
- Faster students will both revise simpler skills and knowledge *and* get a chance to reach further with the more complex exercises .

Key Skills

- Word knowledge – both topic specific and general
- Text comprehension – both as a skill itself where you learn how to reveal and understand the content of a text and as a means of finding the relevant facts in a text and learning them efficiently
- Applying both existing and newly gained knowledge to discuss bigger matters



Tipps

There should be a progression in difficulty at all three steps, making it possible for even the weakest students to achieve some results throughout the whole exercise, yet challenging the more advanced ones.

Moreover

- The method should be possible to adapt to fit most theoretical school subjects, such as mother tongue, a foreign language, social science or science – in fact any subject where the content of a text should be learnt and applied
- Faster students will solve the easier tasks quickly and then have time to solve more difficult ones as well (both revising and learning new things)
- The exercise will take some for the teacher time to create, but could be used over and over again
- The exercise could probably also be used as a test



Evaluation – Three Step Method



Method used in the following lessons:

Country	Nr of teachers	Nr of pupils	Aged	School subject
Austria	2	38	16-17	English, German
Belgium	3	80	15-19	Hardware, programming, English
Ireland	3			
Spain	2	13	13-14	Ethics, Spanish
Sweden	1	73	13-16	Swedish, Swedisch for newly arrived immigrants, German, Swedish as a second language

Results of evaluation of students:

The results of this method have been very different in different countries and classis. For example, the Austrian results:

Assignment 1: Students liked to work with this method. The most surprising aspect was, that the weak students could achieve good results in the third level. They tried to give their best, to show the teacher, that they are also able to do these tasks. The time management was a little irritating, they would like to have some kind of “flexible working hours”. Better students did not really take the first two levels seriously.

Assignment 2: The method did not work at all for the weaker students. Each higher level based on the former one, so if they could not finish this, it was not possible to succeed. Meanwhile the second level a part of the student lost motivation totally, so it was nearly impossible to keep them quiet and working. Better students liked the method, because of the challenging third level.

Pros:

- Fun, good with personal reflection in step 3, stimulating to work in pairs, easier to learn new words in a context
- Increasing difficulty level was good
- Interesting, challenging tasks in the third level
- Good that you not only stick with the words
- Good variety
- Interesting structure of an exercise



- The third step was interesting
- Could focus on my strengths
- Motivating method, because of very different kinds of tasks

Cons:

- Some (more advanced) student would have wanted more questions in step 3
- You may not work as long as you wish with one exercise
- The instructions could be clearer

○

Results of evaluation of teachers:

The experiences with this method were complete different in different classes. We are very sure, that these results are based on the given assignments. In some classes the three steps were really complete independently, so students could work on each step, without finishing the former one. In this class the feedback was quite positive. As expected, especially the weaker students liked to work on more challenging examples, instead of staying on the first level. It was interesting to see, that the weaker students were able to achieve good results in the third step, meanwhile the stronger once mostly did a very sloppy work in the first two steps.

Other assignments were not worked out perfect. It was not easy possible to work on the higher levels without finishing the lower once. So, students, which did not finish this, where quickly frustrated and lost motivation.

Pros:

- Efficient way of learning new vocabulary (words are being used in a context)
- Stimulating for the pupils to work in pairs
- Suitable also for fact oriented material (such as science or geography)
- Intense activity and creativity during the short and limited time
- Students are engaged, take active part
- Students become a deeper understanding for the whole text – skills for text comprehension are trained
- Students had much "outflow" (a chance to express themselves)
- Useful to talk about and reflect on the language
- It offers a new way of teaching / revising grammar / other topics
- Students are all actively involved
- Students practice on their own level, they are challenged in case they understand the topic well and they are stimulated in case they don't understand the topic that well yet
- Students are motivated because they can work on their own level and pace
- Students practice the grammar a lot better than with a traditional approach
- I also tried the method and I found it useful, it allowed each student to experience success.
- It also allowed students to continue working at their own pace without more able students feeling like they were being punished for finishing first.
- They work well and comfortably at their own pace.
- Any kind of content can be worked with this method.
- This method gave us a clue to work on definitions.
- A new method and frequent changes are good for enhance reading. They READ!!!
- Especially weaker students are high motivated to work on challenging examples



- Nearly every student has one example fitting for him, because the three levels require different knowledge and skills

Cons:

- Rather time consuming, each step may not take too long
- Creating one of these lessons takes up a lot of time because you need exercises on all different levels
- Because the teacher is concerned with the elementary group, it is hard to judge whether the other groups really understand the topic that well (or whether they were just lucky on the mock test and ended up in the expert group)
- When you are not used to this approach, it could become chaotic in the classroom
- Correcting requires you to go around everyone
- Having multiple resources ready for students to use to help with their research/work – however it just helps you ensure you are organised and prepared.
- Vocabulary questions are not the easiest for them to answer, but text comprehension
- If they can choose, they do group 2 first, even group 3
- Working on definitions and meanings is hard for them
- To work in his own speed is not possible because of the strict time management.
- It is not easy to find three different tasks, which are independent.
- If tasks are not independent, students loose motivation for the higher levels.

Disclaimer:

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

