Using magazines and newspapers to help your language learning

Magazines and newspapers are an enjoyable and valuable source of authentic language used by native speakers. As some of the articles and advertisements are short, you can do language study at any time during the advertisements on TV, sitting on the bus, waiting for a class, while having a tea or coffee, etc.

There are often a lot of other visual clues to help you understand the writing, e.g. photos, headings, captions, cartoons, pictures etc.

Choose a magazine that is interesting and don't be afraid of putting one down if it turns out to be boring for you. You will be a lot more active and successful in your learning if you use materials you enjoy.

- Look at the front cover or contents page to choose an article, or simply flick through the pages until something catches your eye. It could be a word, someone's name, a picture, etc.

- The main headings, captions and photos can give you a good idea of what is in the article and some of the language that may be used.

- Read the first paragraph (which should introduce the story and topic), and then you can skim to check if it is what you want to read, and if it is, you will then need to read it in more detail.

- Once you know what the article is about, you may decide to concentrate on certain aspects of the reading, e.g. the use of reported speech or pronouns, the 'shortened' language of the headlines and advertisements, discourse analysis, etc.

- Sometimes, you can find similar articles in other magazines, newspapers, or on TV which will reinforce the language and subject you are reading about. You can compare the way they are written and the vocabulary and types of language which is used.

- Some people like to keep a notebook of new and useful vocabulary either in the form of a mind map, or in alphabetical order or in subject groupings. Use whatever system suits you best.