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**Reading to Write: What directs the negotiation of meaning**

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This study looks at how ESL learners cope with the task of reading a text in order to write about it. It examines:

1. how the ESL learners plan to write their response to the reading text; and
2. what directs the negotiation of meaning of the reading text.

The subjects of this study are 26 first year matriculation students enrolled in an English foundation course. They read a thought-provoking passage, and then wrote an essay discussing the main idea of the passage. Analysis of the essays revealed three types of orientation, that is, towards the text, the task and the topic. Two learners from each category are selected for an in-depth study of the reading-to-write process using the thinking-aloud procedure. This paper offers suggestions as to how teachers can help ESL learners interact with a text, and express their ideas on the topic.

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