# MAIN IDEA IDENTIFICATION

READING STRATEGIES
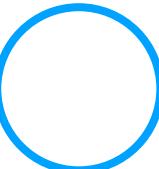
PROF. BRUNO DE AZEVEDO

WHY MAIN IDEAS?
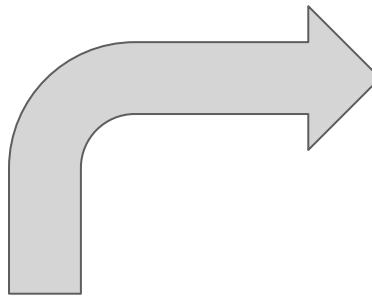
❏ Summarizing is part of human nature.

❏ Our memory cannot store all the information it receives.

❏ Sometimes the details are not important.

Sample Reading Passage

→ **TOPIC SENTENCE**

Left-handed people suffer more from stress than their right-handed peers, according to a study of 1,100 adults by University of Michigan researchers. As a result, they smoke and drink more. Fifty-five percent of the lefties smoked, whereas fewer than half of the righties smoked.Furthermore, the lefties consumed more alcohol per year than their right-handed counterparts.
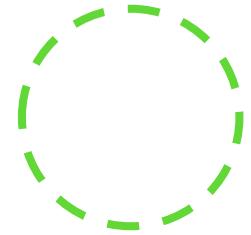
Notice that in this paragraph, it was **the first sentence** that told you the main idea. This sentence, called a **"topic sentence,"** **usually appears at the beginning.**

Sometimes, however, the paragraph's main idea is expressed in the last sentence, and sometimes readers must determine the main idea of a paragraph by summarizing the author's message themselves.
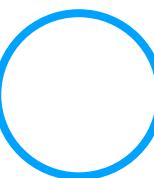
TEXT STRUCTURE

➔ A text is generally contains paragraphs.

➔ Each paragraph has a dominant idea which is developed and grounded by following sentences

REPETINDO:
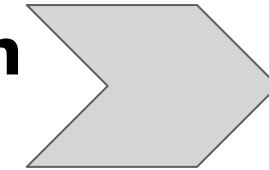
➔ Cada parágrafo tem uma ideia dominante que é desenvolvida e embasada pelas sentenças que se seguem.
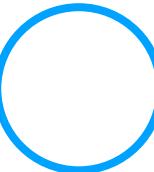
**You ought to know what to do to help a person who is choking.**

First, you stand behind the choking victim and put your arms around his or her waist. **Second,** you make a fist and place the thumb side against the person's stomach just above the navel, but below the ribs. **Third,** grasp your fist with your other hand and press into the victim's abdomen with a quick upward thrust. Repeat this action if necessary.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

To learn a language formally is an important skill in today's global world, and **emerging technologies have created new opportunities for language learners.** With the popularity of one of the emerging technologies, namely "Chatbots", there has been strong increasing interest to use their potential for formal language learning, especially English. The chatbot technology provides a conversational environment where a user can interact in a way like interacting with a human. The chatbot can be queried by a user for certain information, and it can provide feedback to the user on various language aspects, such as grammar or vocabulary, when explicitly asked to do so. **In this case, it can be used for English language learning.**
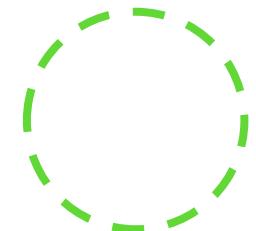
leading to the main idea

SUPPORTING DETAILS
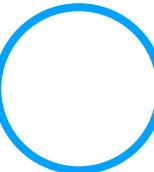
MAIN IDEA

IDEIA DOMINANTE DO PARÁGRAFO
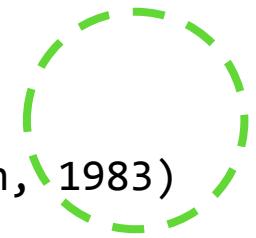
Cada **parágrafo** geralmente apresenta uma ideia principal, que geralmente é apresentada na **primeira ou segunda sentenças de cada parágrafo.**
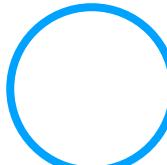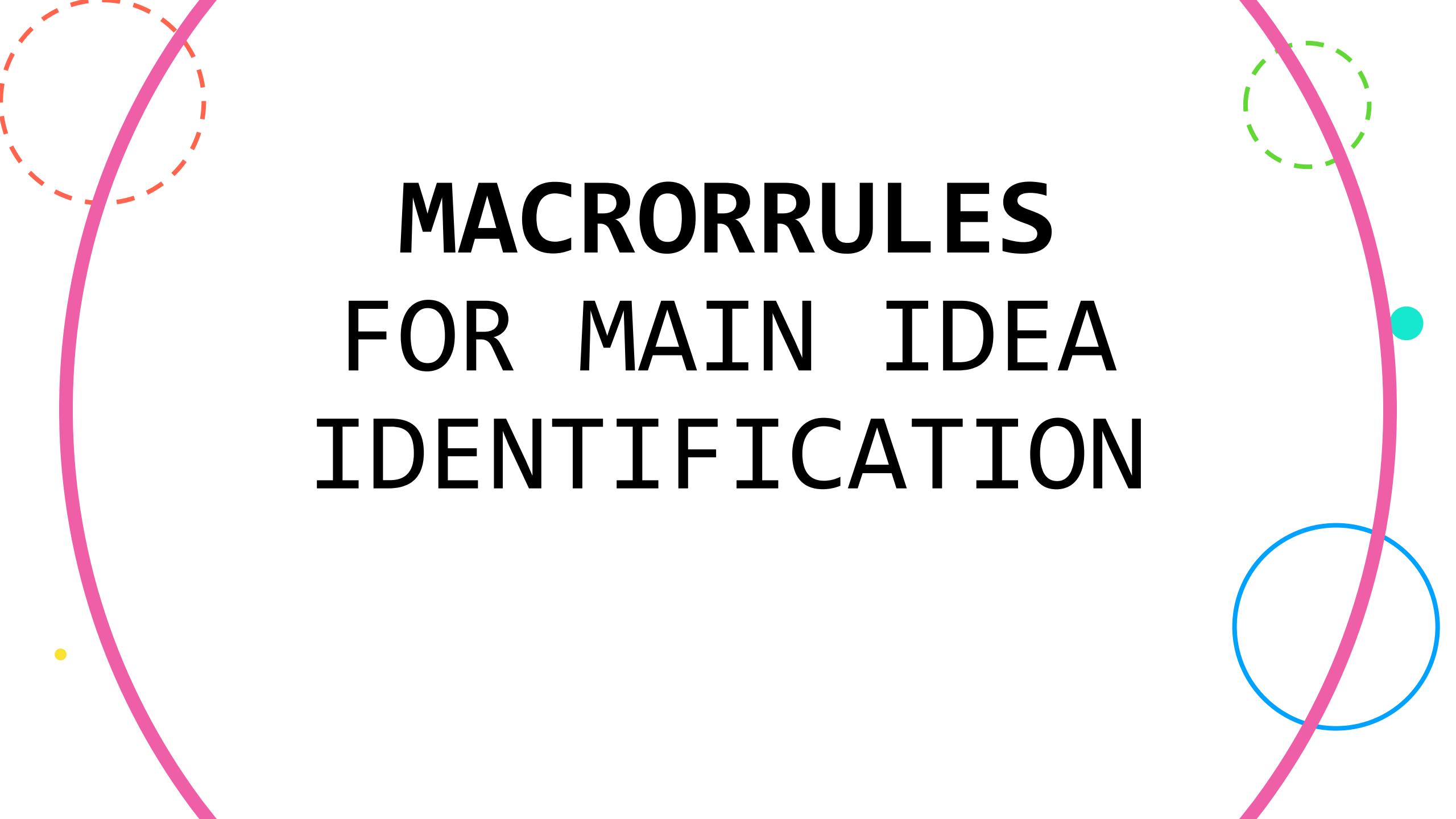
Uma ideia é importante quando:

(Kintsch, 1998; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983)

➔ Está no **título**

➔ Está marcada com sinais gráficos como tamanho da fonte, cor, negrito, itálico

➔ É acompanhada por sinais lexicais como "**importante**" "**relevante**", "**para concluir**...", "**o principal**..."

➔ É reiterada por meio de paráfrases e expressões como "**em outras palavras**", "**ou seja**"

➔ É **explicada**, desenvolvida em detalhe ao longo do parágrafo (isso quer dizer...)

➔ Está mais saliente em comparação às outras ideias do texto – **hierarquia** (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978)

➔ Estabelece relações de **causa/consequência** com outras ideias do texto (Trabasso & Suh, 1993)

MACRORRULES FOR MAIN IDEA IDENTIFICATION
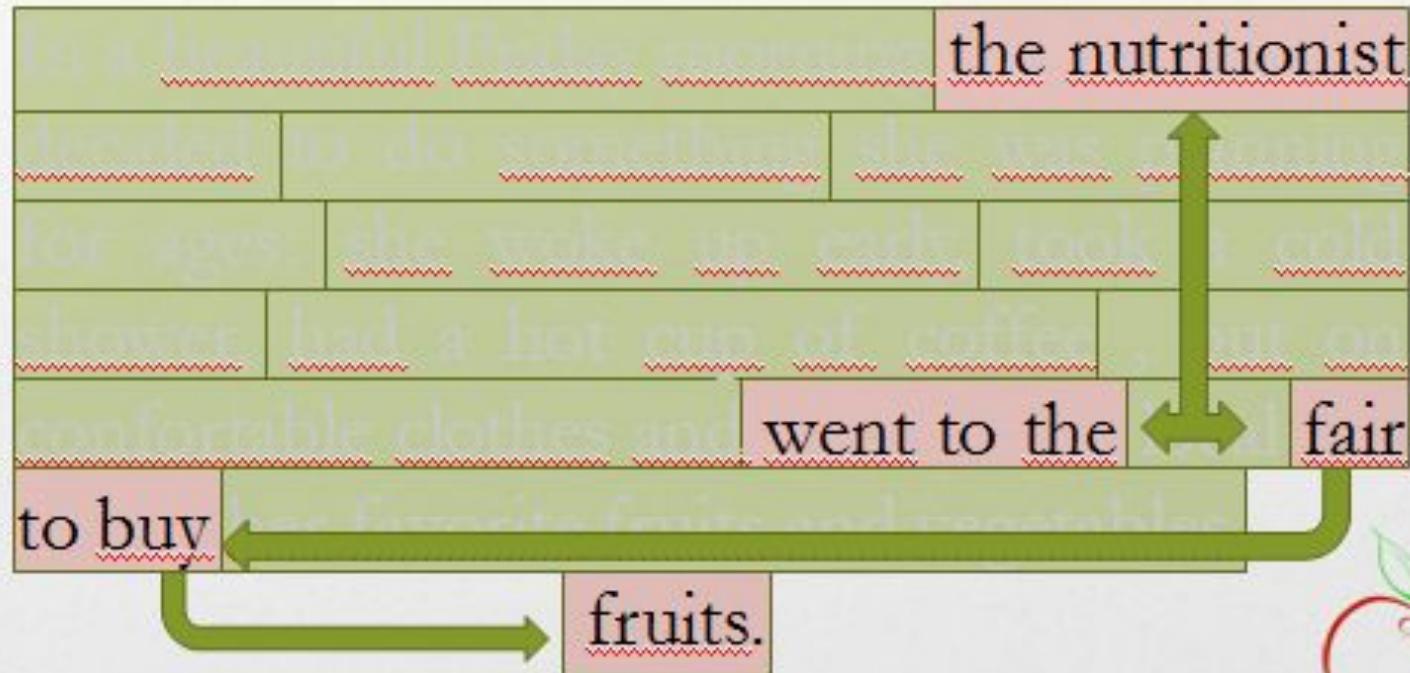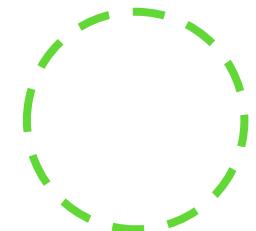
Propositions

In a beautiful Friday morning the nutritionist decided to do something she was planning for ages: she woke up early, took a cold shower, had a hot cup of coffee , put on comfortable clothes and went to the local fair to buy her favorite fruits and vegetables.
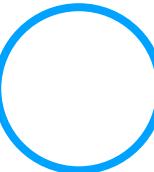
The macrostructure of the text

the nutritionist

went to the ⟷ fair

to buy

fruits.

# Macrorules for Summarizing Texts

1. **Deletion of trivial information** - eliminate unimportant information/ minor details about the topics.

2. **Deletion of redundant information** - eliminate rewordings/restatements of the more important sentences.

3. **Superordination of lists** - use superordinate terms to substitute for lists of category members.
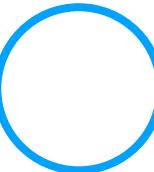
Macrorules for Summarizing Texts
(Brown & Day, 1983 apud Tomitch, 2012)

4. **Selection of a topic sentence** - select the sentence which is the author's summary of the main constituent of the text-the paragraph.

5. **Invention of a topic sentence** - provide a summary of the paragraph - a topic sentence - if it is not explicitly stated/invent your own.
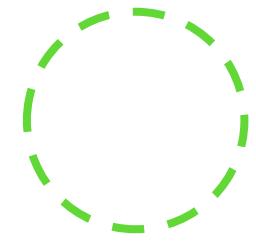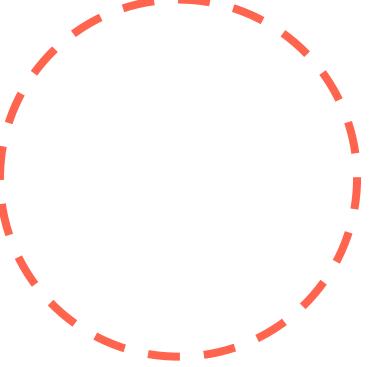
Invention of a topic sentence

No exemplo ao lado, podemos ver a ideia principal **não está explicitamente mencionada no texto.** É necessário que o/a leitor **construa a ideia principal a partir do conjunto de sentenças do texto.**

Artificial Intelligence
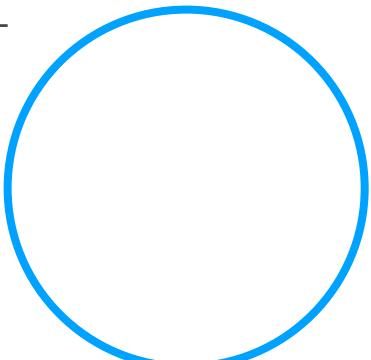
Artificial intelligence (AI) is a broad area of computer applications characterized by the use of symbolic rather than numeric computations. Symbolic computation means that symbols, consisting of names rather than numbers, are manipulated. Also, symbolic computation is more conveniently done with linked lists of data rather than arrays. This kind of programming sometimes requires more flexibility than other programming domains. For example, in some AI applications the ability to create and execute code segments during execution is convenient.

The first widely used programming language developed for AI applications was the functional language LISP (McCarthy et al., 1965), which appeared in 1959. Most AI applications developed prior to 1990 were written in LISP or one of its close relatives. During the early 1970s, however, an alternative approach to some of these applications appeared—logic programming using the Prolog (Clocksin and Mellish, 2003) language. More recently, some AI applications have been written in systems languages such as C. Scheme (Dybvig, 2003), a dialect of LISP, and Prolog are introduced in Chapters 15 and 16, respectively.

THE MAIN IDEA STRATEGY
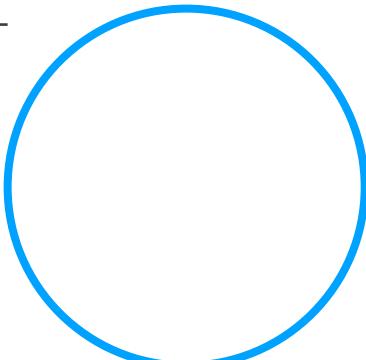
BOUDAH (2013)

What is the difference between **topic** and **main idea?**
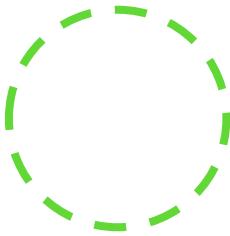
A **topic** is a word or phrase that everything in a text refers to. The topic is usually expressed in a few words and is the general subject of a paragraph or essay.

The **main idea** of a text is the most important point being said about the topic. It is usually expressed in a sentence or constructed by the reader.
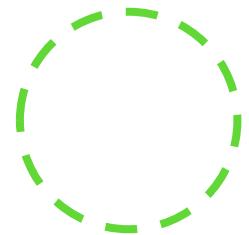
EXAMPLE:

What is the **topic**?
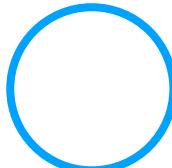
What is the **main idea**?

Most of us believe that the death of a spouse often leads to the premature death of the bereft partner. After twelve years of study involving 4,000 widows and widowers, Johns Hopkins University researchers have perceived that it is the husbands, and not the wives, whose lives are shortened by the loss of their spouses. However, the study indicates that widowers who remarry enjoy greater longevity than men the same age who continue to live with their first wives.
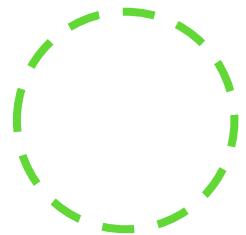
SITUAÇÃO: você está dentro do ônibus e escuta a seguinte conversa:

- Como é, foi lá?
- Fui.
- E daí, falou com o cara?
- Ele não tava. Mas o outro atendeu.
- E o que foi que ele disse?
- Que faltava aquela folha. Aquela que você disse que nem precisava.
- Aquela? Ih... então você vai ter mesmo que falar com ela.
- Mas ela perdeu. Ela disse pra ele.
- E perdeu onde?
- Lá mesmo, eu acho. Quem é que iria querer roubar aquilo?

Fonte: FARACO, Carlos Alberto; TEZZA, Cristóvão. Oficina de texto. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2003

COMPREENSÃO

→ Qual é a ideia principal do diálogo?

→ Quais inferências são plausíveis a partir da leitura?

→ Texto oral vs. texto escrito

Como é, foi lá?

Fui.

E daí, falou com o cara?
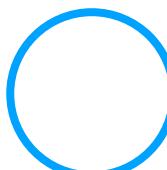
Ele não tava. Mas o outro atendeu.

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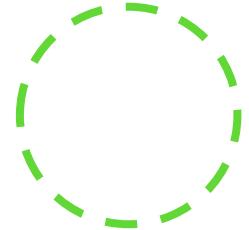
E perdeu onde?
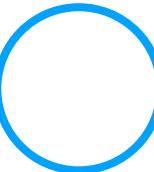
Lá mesmo, eu acho. Quem é que iria querer roubar aquilo?

CONCEPTUALIZING INFERENCES

➔ The meanings intended by the writer are not always written out, and readers often have to add what is implicit in the text.

➔ This addition of information is based on the reader's background knowledge.

➔ **LITERAL COMPREHENSION:** meaning derived from explicitly stated information from print.

➔ **INFERENTIAL COMPREHENSION:** meaning beyond the one stated in the text, usually the result of background knowledge integration.

◆ IN ADDITION TO THAT, **three** sub-processes are involved in inferential comprehension: **integration, summarization, and elaboration.**

English | Español | Français | Italiano

wefeedback
sharing food, changing lives

meals fed to **354,774** children

ABOUT GLOBAL FEEDBACK CALCULATOR BLOG

Already a member? | Join

What is WeFeedback all about?

In the developed world, life puts tasty food on our plates all the time. French sausage, avocado or chocolate cake — we all have our favorites.

If we take just one of these things and give it back, or feed it back, we can help change the lives of hungry school children around the world.

My name is... **Kate Watts**

I want to share... a sushi platter

I usually pay... 20 $ (USD)

More servings will feed more children...

3

$60.00

If you share, you will feed **240** children

Feed them now

Disponível em: http://wefeedback.org. Acesso em: 30 jul. 2012.

A internet tem servido a diferentes interesses, ampliando, muitas vezes, o contato entre pessoas e instituições. Um exemplo disso é o *site* WeFeedback, no qual a internauta Kate Watts

Ⓐ comprou comida em promoção.

Ⓑ inscreveu-se em concurso.

Ⓒ fez doação para caridade.

Ⓓ participou de pesquisa de opinião.

Ⓔ voluntariou-se para trabalho social.

Is the question focused on literal or inferential comprehension?

The question literally asked what was Kate Watts' interest in the website. In order to answer it, one needs to "derive literal meaning from print" (Gagné et al., 1993, p. 272).

QUESTÃO 91

A internet tem servido a diferentes interesses, ampliando, muitas vezes, o contato entre pessoas e instituições. Um exemplo disso é o site WeFeedback, no qual a internauta Kate Watts

A comprou comida em promoção.
B inscreveu-se em concurso.
C fez doação para caridade.
D participou de pesquisa de opinião.
E voluntariou-se para trabalho social.

QUESTÃO 92

If You Can't Master English, Try Globish

PARIS — It happens all the time: during an airport delay the man to the left, a Korean perhaps, starts talking to the man opposite, who might be Colombian, and soon they are chatting away in what seems to be English. But the native English speaker sitting between them cannot understand a word.

They don't know it, but the Korean and the Colombian are speaking Globish, the latest addition to the 6,800 languages that are said to be spoken across the world. Not that its inventor, Jean-Paul Nerrière, considers it a proper language.

"It is not a language, it is a tool," he says. "A language is the vehicle of a culture. Globish doesn't want to be that at all. It is a means of communication."

Nerrière doesn't see Globish in the same light as utopian efforts such as Kosmos, Volapuk, Novial or staunch Esperanto. Nor should it be confused with barbaric Algol (for Algorithmic language). It is a sort of English lite: a means of simplifying the language and giving it rules so it can be understood by all.
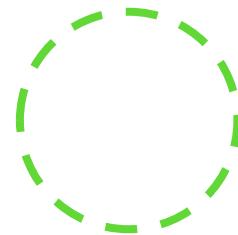
BLUME, M. Disponível em: www.nytimes.com. Acesso em: 28 out. 2013 (fragmento).

Considerando as ideias apresentadas no texto, o *Globish* (*Global English*) é uma variedade da língua inglesa que

Ⓐ tem *status* de língua por refletir uma cultura global.

Ⓑ facilita o entendimento entre o falante nativo e o não nativo.

Ⓒ tem as mesmas características de projetos utópicos como o esperanto.

Ⓓ altera a estrutura do idioma para possibilitar a comunicação internacional.

Ⓔ apresenta padrões de fala idênticos aos da variedade usada pelos falantes nativos.

Is the question focused on literal or inferential comprehension?

Question 92/2014, in contrast, demands one to construct the main idea of the text: a variation of the English language that allows international communication. Once this main idea has been established, the correct alternative should be easier to identify.

SUMMARIZATION

SUMMARIZATION

➔ **Summarization involves [three](#) processes:**

1. **Deletion** , which has to do with eliminating information that is not of direct importance to the controlling idea;

2. **Generalization**, where more global stated ideas are selected instead of specific and detailed ones;

3. **Construction,** which involves creating, constructing a main idea when it is not explicitly stated by the author.

The increasing ubiquity of artificial intelligence in our lives is creating waves in academia. Three universities in Australia have adopted what seems like a landmark policy. The three institutions are allowing students to use AI when taking assessments, albeit under strict conditions. Professor Romy Lawson said: "Instead of banning students from using such programs, we aim to assist academic staff and students to use digital tools to support learning." The Internet abounds with AI text generators. These can be used to create essays that look authentic enough to fool examiners. The content created by these AI tools evade detection by even the smartest of anti-plagiarism tools.

Artificial Intelligence is posing huge challenges to exam integrity. It is the biggest disruptor since calculators were allowed into maths tests. The latest quandary for educators comes from a language processing chatbox called ChatGPT. This can produce highly authentic human-like content on any subject in seconds. It has sparked fears that students will use it to write essays. The University of South Australia's Dr Vitomir Kovanovic said teachers needed to embrace AI. He said: "You cannot stop it. The alternative is the Middle Ages – going to pen and paper." He added that universities needed to change with the times. He said: "It's like having a driving school, but teaching people how to ride horses."

# SUMMARIZATION

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Some universities in Australia allow students to use AI when **taking tests** instead of **prohibiting their use.**

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