

# Teaching Extensive Reading to EFL Secondary Students' Online

**Reima Al-Jarf, Ph.D.**

**Grade level:** 10, 11, 12 grade.

**Course:** English as a foreign language (extensive reading).

**Duration:** 45 minutes if the activity is conducted synchronously in a computer lab. No time limit if activity is conducted asynchronously from home. At least once a week for the whole semester.

## Introduction

Extensive reading means reading in quantity to gain a general understanding of the material read. The purpose of extensive reading is to train students to read directly and fluently in English as a foreign language (EFL) for pleasure without the help of their teacher. It aims to develop an interest in reading, reading for fun, reading independently, and good reading habits; to expand the students' knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structures; to increase overall comprehension; and to familiarize the students with relevant socio-cultural material. The students read material of interest to them. They read at their own pace according to their individual reading and linguistic abilities.

## Goals

The end-of-semester overall goals of this extensive reading activity are to develop the students' ability to:

- comprehend the overall meaning of the material read.
- give a written summary of the gist of the material read.
- enjoy reading.
- increase reading speed.
- have a positive attitudes towards books and reading in English as a foreign language (EFL).
- continue to read on their own online or offline after class and after the semester is over.

## **Objectives**

At the end of the online activity, the student should be able to:

- locate stories/books that he/she likes to read online.
- read for the overall meaning not specific details.
- post a written summary of the story read in the online forum or blog individually or as part of a small group.
- collaborate with other students in reading and posting a summary.
- interact with other students in posting, asking questions and commenting on the stories read.

## **Extensive Reading Materials**

- Picture books, children's simplified stories, children's encyclopedias, children's magazines within the students' proficiency level and depending on availability (in paper form, on CD-ROM or on the Internet).
- Select material with a writing style that entails a certain amount of repetition without monotony. New vocabulary items should not coincide with difficulties of grammatical structures. Select material that is at a lower level of difficulty than that for intensive reading. Material selected should have simple grammatical structures and high frequency vocabulary items. Where graded texts are available, structures should be already familiar, and new vocabulary items should be introduced slowly in such a way that their meaning can be inferred from context.

## **Examples of Reading Websites:**

- Children's story books online ( all ages):  
<http://www.magickeys.com/books/>
- 100 free short English stories for ESL learners: <http://www.rong-chang.com/qa2/>
- Classic short stories: <http://www.world-english.org/stories.htm>
- Long ESL stories:  
<http://www.eslmonkeys.com/student/storyroom/storylist.php?cat=long%20story>
- [http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Jungle\\_Book](http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Jungle_Book)

- Short stories in English: <http://www.englishclub.com/reading/short-stories.htm>
- Fact Monster: Online Almanac, Dictionary, Encyclopedia: <http://www.factmonster.com/>
- Short stories, long stories, classical stories: <http://www.eslmonkeys.com/student/storyroom/storyroom.html>
- Ghost Stories: <http://www.hotfroguk.co.uk/Products/ghost-stories>
- 900+ Free EPUB Books: <http://www.web-books.com/>
- International children's digital library: <http://en.childrenslibrary.org/>

### **Setting**

- Use an Online Discussion forum or a blog. An Online Course Management System such as MOODLE or Nicenet ([www.nicenet.org](http://www.nicenet.org)) can be used free of charge. A blog or forum can be created using WordPress (<http://wordpress.org>) or Tripod ([www.tripod.com](http://www.tripod.com)).
- This activity can be conducted synchronously in a computer lab with Internet connection. The students post their summaries, questions and comments in the computer lab.
- The activity can be conducted asynchronously, if the students have no access to computers and Internet from school. Students can use their own computers and access the Internet from home or from an Internet café. They post their summaries, questions and comments at their own convenience from home or from an Internet café.

### **Before the Online Session: Orientation and Guidance by the Teacher**

- On the first day of classes, the teacher informs the students of the following:
  - activity objectives;
  - extensive reading standards: each student should read at least 10 books per year and posting at least 10 summaries and 10 comments. Each student keeps a portfolio of the books read and their summaries;
  - how to select a suitable book (the student can skim through a couple to assess the difficulty level of the grammatical structures and vocabulary items. The student should be familiar with the sentence structures and there should be few

- difficult words per page. First students select short stories or thin books and then increase the length gradually);
- When, where and how the student reads: Every week or two, each student selects a book or a story that he/she would like to read. At home, the student sets a time for reading the story. He/she reads few pages everyday for 30-60 minutes.
  - At the end of the week, the student writes a summary of the material read. The written summary should answer 6 Q-words: When, Where, When, What, Why, how;
  - incentives: Weekly & end-of semester awards.
- assess the students' computer literacy skills with a short questionnaire.
  - give the students the blog's username and password or the Nicenet class key and ask them to register or enroll themselves.
  - students must use their real names not nicknames.
  - show the students the forum or blog's tools and how to start an entry, post summaries, questions and comments.
  - initiate interaction by posting sample summaries of stories with which the students are familiar.
  - post reading websites with different kinds of reading materials and difficulty levels and encourage the students to post websites or reading material that is of interest to them.
  - define the minimum number of stories read and summaries to be posted by each student.
  - set a day of the week when new weekly summaries should be posted.
  - students read stories individually, in pairs or in small groups at home and post a 100- 300-word summary from home or in the computer lab. Class members post questions and comments on their classmates' summaries and stories from home or in the computer lab.
  - encourage the students to read for the overall meaning and not for very specific details.
  - to avoid plagiarism, students must give the source of the material they read or cite. They must give the book title, author, publisher and publication year for each book they summarize.

#### **Before the Online Activity: Preparation by the Students**

- The students select a weekly story. Each student selects a different story.

- They read it at home individually, or the students read the same story in pairs or in small groups of 4-5. Change members of the groups with each story.
- The students read for the overall meaning, not for very specific details.
- They do not have to look the meanings of each and every difficult word they encounter in the dictionary. They infer meanings of difficult words from context.
- They write a summary that answers the 6 Q-words and word-process it.
- They read their classmates' posts and write questions and comments.

### **During the Online Extensive Reading Activity**

#### **After the Online Extensive Reading Activity**

##### **Providing Feedback and Motivation**

- Develop rapport through positive comments on the students' posts, giving encouraging remarks, and allowing them to comment on each other's and the teacher's posts.
- Allow the students to ask questions and to talk about their problems and difficulties.
- Do not correct students' grammatical and spelling mistakes. You may ask students to correct each other's mistakes.
- Give written comments and questions that would help the students in their summaries, comments and interaction.
- Provide technical support.

##### **Anticipated Student Problems**

1. Some students may not have access to the internet.
2. Some students will have trouble registering and logging in the online forum.
3. Some students may not post their summaries and comments in the right place.
4. Some students would print their summaries on paper and bring it to the teacher instead of posting them online.
5. Some students will ask the teacher to correct their summaries.

### **How these Problems Can Be Handled**

1. Advise them to access the internet once a week from a friend or relative's house.
2. You can do the registration for them with a different username.
3. Always post written instruction on where and how summaries, comments, links...ect should be posted. Move the misplaced posts to their right place.
4. Thanks those students and tell them that their classmates would be pleased to read their summaries when they posted online.
5. Assure the students that it is O.K. to make mistakes and that ideas are more important. Tell them that they will improve along the semester, and with practice. Have students occasionally correct each other's summaries using a different color.

### **Assessment of Attainment of Objectives**

- The teacher gives awards for those students who have read and posted more than 10 stories. Post their names in an honor list in the school.
- Post book summaries on the class or school bulletin board.
- To assess improvement in reading speed (words read per minute), each student can calculate his/her reading speed at the beginning of the semester, at the end of the first month, at the end of the second and so on and keep a record of that. This would keep the students' spirits high.
- To assess the students' overall comprehension ability, they read a short story and write a short summary of it the first session at the beginning of the semester and do the same at the end of the semester. Students' scores on both tests can be compared.
- Ask the students about their opinions of the negative and positive aspects of the activity by means of a questionnaire.
- Keep a daily or weekly log of the online class progress, challenges, difficulties and aspects that need improvement.

### **References**

1. Al-Jarf, R. (2009). Maximizing ESL freshman readers' skill with online instruction. In Roger Cohen (Ed.) Explorations in Second Language Reading. Pp. 133-144 TESOL. ERIC ED 523349.

2. Al-Jarf, R. (2009). Using online instruction in English for art education. *Asian EFL Journal Teaching Articles*, 34, 50-60. ERIC ED634168.
3. Al-Jarf, R. (2007). Impact of blended learning on EFL college readers. IADIS International Conference on e-Learning, Lisbon. ERIC ED634492 [Google Scholar](#)
4. Al-Jarf, R. (2006). The effects of elearning on teaching English as a foreign language to Saudi college students. *Education and Psychology Journal*, 26, 215-242.
5. Al-Jarf, R. (2005). Reading Promotion Programs in South Korea. *Moroccan Studies*, 20, 183-188.
6. Al-Jarf, R. (1989). Classification of Reading Comprehension Questions in Elementary Basal Readers in Saudi Arabia. Center for Educational Research, King Saud University.
7. Al-Jarf, R. (2001). Advance organizers in elementary, junior and senior high school reading textbooks in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Educational Studies*, July. Institute of Educational Studies, University of Cairo. [Google Scholar](#)
8. Al-Jarf, R. (2001). Cohesion Skill Instruction in Junior and Senior Reading Textbooks in Saudi Arabia: An Evaluation Study. *Risaalat Ul-Khaleej Al-Arabi. Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States*, 87, 73-97. [Google Scholar](#)
9. Al-Jarf, R. (2001). Context analysis skills instruction in elementary, junior and senior high school reading textbooks in Saudi Arabia. Cairo: Ain Shams University, *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction Studies*, 71, 73-97. [Google Scholar](#)
10. Al-Jarf, R. (2001). Study skills instruction in junior and senior reading textbooks in Saudi Arabia. *Scientific Journal. (In Arabic) College of Education. Asiat University*, 17, 2, July. [Google Scholar](#)
11. Al-Jarf, R. (2001). Text structure instruction in junior and senior high school reading textbooks. 8th Yearbook of the Saudi Educational and Psychological Association. [Google Scholar](#)
12. Al-Jarf, R. (1995). *An Arabic word identification diagnostic test for the first three grades*. Center for Educational Research. College of Education. King Saud University. [Google Scholar](#)
13. Al-Jarf, R. (1994). Analysis of Saudi first, second and third grade students' errors in word identification. *Journal of Contemporary Education, Cairo*, 9(61), 88-147. [Google Scholar](#)

14. Al-Jarf, R. (1992). *Classification of word identification exercises in elementary school reading textbooks in Saudi Arabia*. Third Yearbook of the Saudi Educational and Psychological Association. [Google Scholar](#)
15. Al-Jarf, R. (1989). *Classification of reading comprehension questions in elementary basal readers in Saudi Arabia*. Center for Educational Research, King Saud University. [Google Scholar](#)
16. Al-Jarf, Reima (2004). [What our youth read in the age of globalization](#). Symposium of Globalization and Priorities of Education, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia. [Google Scholar](#)