

Promoting EFL Secondary Students' Extensive Reading Skills

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Grade level: 10, 11, 12 grade.

Course: English as a foreign language (EFL).

Duration: 45 minutes (once a week for the whole year).

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 good reading habits, expand the students' knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structures; to develop an interest in reading, increase overall comprehension; to enable the students to read independently, familiarize them with relevant socio-cultural material; and to encourage reading for pleasure. It develops at the student's own pace according to his/her 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.

- give an oral presentation or a written summary of the gist of the storyread.
- enjoy reading.
- increase their reading speed.
- have a positive attitude towards books and reading in English as a foreign language (EFL).
- continue to read on their own after class and after the semester is over.

Objectives

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

- select stories/books that he/she likes to read.
- read for the overall meaning not specific details.
- give an oral presentation of the gist of the story read individually or as part of a small group.
- collaborate with other students.

Extensive Reading Materials

- The material may consist of picture books, children's simplified stories, children's encyclopedias, children's magazines within the students' proficiency level and depending on availability.
- The style of writing should entail a certain amount of repetition. 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.

Activity Setting

- Students take the extensive reading lesson out of class (in the school garden, school library, cafeteria or any other place of their choice) depending on the weather conditions.
- Students sit in a semicircle. They can also sit in small groups of 4. They display their books, stories and magazines on a table.

Before the Class Session: Orientation and Guidance by the Teacher

- On the first day of classes, inform the students of the following:
 - the activity objectives.
 - standards: Each student should read at least 10 books per year. Each student keeps a log of the books read and a portfolio of book summaries.
 - how to select a suitable book (the student can skim through a one or two pages 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 very short stories or thin books, then increase the length gradually).
 - where the activity will take place.
 - how the activity will be conducted.
 - class set up: sit in a semi-circle or small groups.

- oral presentations should answer 6 Q-words: When, Where, When, What, Why, how;
- incentives: weekly awards & end-of semester awards.
- Encourage the students to read for the overall meaning and not for very specific details.
- Bring a sample of picture books, stories and magazines to class for illustration and guidance.

Before the Class Session: Preparation by the Students

- They select a weekly or biweekly story.
- They read it at home individually or students read the same story in small groups of 4.
- They answer the 6 Q-words.
- They do not have to look the meanings of each and every difficult word they encounter in the dictionary. They skip the difficult words or infer their meanings from context.
- Five minutes before the class session, the students arrange the seats in a semi-circle or small groups.
- They display their books and stories on a table in the middle of class.
- They take a look at each other's books.
- They post their summaries on the bulletin board.

During the Extensive Reading Class Session

- Warm-up (3 minutes); student presentations (40 minutes); class session wrap-up (2 minutes).
- Individual students give a short oral presentation for 3-4 minutes. In the case of

large classes, all class members may not have a chance to present in a single class session. Never mind. In this case, the teacher can use the small group activity. Each class session, the teacher can randomly call on students to present. Each class session, each student should expect to be called upon to present every class session.

- When the students tell a story in small group, members of the group read the same story and each student answers one of the 6 Q-words. Each class session the teacher assigns small group members randomly. Members of small groups can be posted in class to save time. The students read their stories and prepare their presentations accordingly.
- Encourage the students to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words from context (3-5 words per session).
- Students may act some stories in class.
- The class selects the best 3-5 presentations.
- The teacher gives marks every week. Marks can be posted in class.

After the Extensive Reading Class Session

- Students may act some stories in the school extra curricular activities or
- school broadcast or podcast.
- Give awards for the students who read more than 10 stories and post their names in an honor list in the school
- The students may post their written book summaries on a class or school bulletin board.

Providing Feedback and Motivation before,

During and After Class

- Develop rapport with the students through smiles, eye contact and using encouraging remarks.
- Do not correct students' mistakes while they are presenting no matter how poor they are, in order for them to gain confidence in speaking English in front of a group. Prompt those who find it difficult to speak with questions or keywords (who, where, when, what happened) to help them in summarizing their stories and in their oral presentations.
- The students keep a log of the books they have read and a portfolio of summaries of stories read.

Anticipated Student Problems

1. Some students will be hesitant to bring a story.
2. Some students will come to class without having read or finished reading their story.
3. Some students will be shy, nervous and reluctant to talk in front of their classmates.
4. Some students will be worried about making mistakes.
5. Some will try to memorize a summary or parts of the story.

How These Problems Can Be Handled

1. The teacher can have some stories and books and ask the student to select one, borrow it, set a deadline for returning and read it.
2. In the first couple of weeks, be lenient and assure the students that that is O.K., but tell them that they can give their presentation the following week and that there is extra credit for the oral presentation.

3. The students can rehearse and practice telling the story at home in front of a mirror. Assure the students and tell them that you will be prompting them during their presentations.
4. Tell the students that it is O.K. to make mistakes and that focus is on ideas not grammar. Assure them that they will improve with practice and that every week they will get better and learn more.
5. The students should know that they should not memorize, that they have to use their own words, and they should answer the 6 Q-words.

Assessment of Attainment of Objectives

- Give awards to all of students who read more than 10 stories over the whole semester.
- Post names in an honor list in the school.
- 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 soon 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 or give an oral presentation of it in the first session at the beginning of the semester and at the end of the semester. A checklist can be used for this purpose:

	1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Good	4 Very good	5 Excellent
Pronunciation and fluency					

Grammar and vocabulary					
Comprehension of main ideas					
Covering significant details or story components (characters, setting...etc)					

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