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Reading, and developing expertise in teaching reading

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Experience

Better

Learning

“Reading is everything. Reading makes me feel like I've accomplished something, learned something, become a better person. Reading makes me smarter. Reading gives me something to talk about later on.”

Nora Ephron



A few things about reading

- **reading is an amazing human achievement**
- **reading is not a single skill, but a collection of skills**
- **in L1 we read at about 250-300 wpm (Carrell and Grabe, 2010)**

A few more things about reading

- across school age groups and across countries, girls read more than boys (Boffey, 2016)
- girls outperform boys in reading (Brown Centre Report, 2015)
- weak readers need to be identified quickly, as there is a danger of a Matthew effect
- in ELT a fairly standard way of 'teaching reading' has developed

Do you recognize this lesson structure?

- **build interest in the topic**
- **pre-teach vocabulary**
- **set a reading task (skimming or scanning)**
- **check**
- **set a second task (eg answer questions)**
- **check**
- **post-reading task (eg a discussion)**

Intensive reading exercises

- **multiple choice questions**
- **true/false questions**
- **who/what/when/where questions**
- **putting pictures into a sequence**
- **matching pictures to parts of a text**
- **matching sub-headings to parts of a text**
- **correcting errors in a summary of a text**
- **inserting sentences/paragraphs into a text from which they were previously removed**

(from Watkins, 2017)

Problems with these exercises

- **a single correct answer**
- **a lack of authenticity**
- **a lack of affective engagement**
- **a focus on detail but not the more important overall meaning**
- **a focus on product over process**

Product rather than process

“...many teachers are so concerned with...getting the correct answer that they fail to attend to the learning process.”

(Rubin, 1975, p.44-45)

What are the alternatives?

- using deep, rather than shallow, questions
- promoting affective engagement with texts
- a focus on reading fluency and extensive reading
- a focus on reading strategies
- teaching critical reading
- preparing learners for the real world and digital reading
- Questions to text

Perhaps...maybe – beyond the right answer

What I know	What is perhaps true	Things I don't know

Using symbols

- ✓ = I agree with this
- X = I disagree with this
- ? = I don't understand fully
- Λ = I need/want more explanation
- ↔ = compare this to...
- ! = this is surprising/shocking
- lol = this is funny

Which film is this from? Who are the actors?



Read with me - fluency

In some ways Audrey Hepburn was a surprise choice to star in Roman Holiday and the producers favoured Elizabeth Taylor. When Hepburn was tested for a much smaller role in the film, the director, William Wyler, was impressed but could see that she was desperately nervous. Wyler decided to simply chat to her and, unbeknown to Hepburn, left the camera rolling. He later said “She had everything I was looking for – charm, innocence and talent. She was also very funny. She was absolutely enchanting.”

Extensive reading

- ...is relatively easy
- ...is fluency focused
- ...involves reading large quantities of text
- ...is usually individual and silent
- ...is pleasurable
- ...often happens outside class
- ...could take up to 20-30 minutes a day (Geva & Ramírez, 2015) and is ongoing – a programme

Benefits of extensive reading

- the amount of reading undertaken correlates with reading skills development (e.g. Tanaka and Stapleton, 2007)
- ER leads to vocabulary growth (e.g. Horst, 2009)
- ER leads to writing skills development (e.g. Hafiz and Tudor, 2009)
- ER leads to grammar acquisition
- ER may be more motivating than 'traditional' classroom reading (Day and Bamford, 1998)

Benefits of extensive reading

“There is plenty of evidence to support the claim that learning (especially of vocabulary) does occur through extensive reading.”

Ellis and Shintani (2014, p.185)

Reading strategies – key question

Do

I

understand?

Critical reading – *Cross Examination*

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Critical reading – *Cross Examination*

- 1. What makes you experts? What qualifications do you have?**
- 2. Who are the other experts? What evidence is there that you are better than them and are ‘leading experts’?**
- 3. What is the evidence that these extensions last longer? How was it gathered?**
- 4. How much longer do they last?**

Questions to text

Imagine you want to study Business Communication at a university in the UK or other English speaking environment.

Find a potential course. Write the name of the institution and precise name of the course.

Questions to text

What are the entry criteria?

What fees would you pay?

What accommodation is offered?

What is the application procedure?

Would you like to study at this university?

Why/why not?

Becoming expert in teaching reading

How do we convert experience into expertise?

Expert teachers...

... tend to be flexible.

...make more 'in-flight' decisions.

...experiment and look for improvements.

...help other teachers.

(Tsui, 2009)

Becoming expert in teaching reading

- interview learners about likes/dislikes and reading habits
- systematically evaluate reading material
- form a reading group
- share with colleagues – run a workshop

Possible workshop format

- write a few short statements about teaching reading that could elicit differing opinions e.g. “The texts we use with learners should be authentic”
- ask the teachers to discuss the statements and be prepared to contribute your own thoughts and observations
- introduce alternative ways of exploiting texts and invite teachers to comment on the activities
- ask the teachers to discuss how they teach reading (for example, the activity types they find particularly useful) and in particular the needs of the learners in your particular context

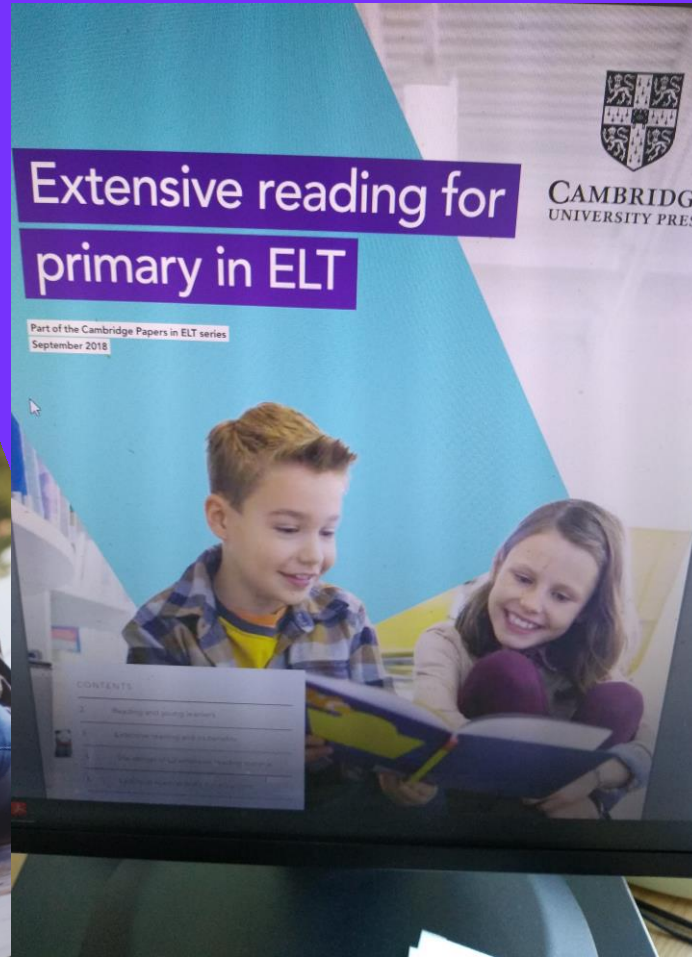
Briefly some research

“A pause after work...a relaxing moment”

“If there was... a... let’s put it this way, a reading activity, I believe that maybe, learners’ motivation to read would be... as if it was a burden”

“It didn’t feel like I was studying English, it seemed something for entertainment but at the same time learning”

Some things to read



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Thank you!

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