

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR READING CLASSES
OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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KUMAGAI Misako

INTRODUCTION:

An EFL (English as a foreign language) reading class, as a general course in the school curriculum, provides a place for students to learn how to read in a foreign language--English. Here, students should acquire and develop various skills and strategies necessary for reading English. The purpose, however, of an EFL reading class is more easily stated than carried out. To that end, this paper presents some reading tasks, practical and easily managed.

READING WITH PURPOSE:

Whatever their reasons, most readers have some purpose to accomplish through an act of reading. The reasons differ among readers. Some may read newspapers to know what is happening in the world. Others may read an academic journal to catch up on the latest information in their particular field of study. Simply for pleasure as well as to kill time some persons read a novel or skim through magazine. Likewise those who read not in their mother tongue but in a second or foreign language read for a reason.

Just think why students attend an EFL reading class. It is not because they want to be able to read English; it is because they want to read English to fulfill some purpose. They read English, for instance, to get certain facts or for enjoyment.

READING STRATEGY:

Because readers have different purposes when they read, they also use and need different methods for reading. In fact, a reader's process of reading depends on his purpose. If one needs to find a telephone number quickly, one scans the telephone directory. If one needs to refresh one's memory of a novel's plot or poem's metaphor, one might skim the piece of literature. But the same literary work

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might be treated differently by a critic, who reads it more intensively, examines and analyses individual chapters, sentences and even words.

In other words, reading strategies appropriate and practical for some reading purposes become inappropriate and impractical for other reading purposes.

COMPETENT READER:

Therefore, the more strategies a reader has and the better he manipulates them, the better he will read. According to the purpose of a written text and the reader's own purpose for reading it, he can ably choose a suitable strategy for reading. Adjusting his reading speed, he swiftly shifts strategies to best fit his reading purpose.

Lautamatti¹ describes the fluent reader as a good exploiter of background knowledge and linguistic redundancy for guessing; a capable user of various reading strategies; and a meaning attender, i.e., he reads with the meaning of the whole context in mind.

Hosenfeld's successful FL readers show us strategies they actually use while reading in a FL². They tend to:

- (i) read in broad phrases, keeping the meaning in mind and skipping inessential words.
- (ii) use contextual clues such as the grammatical category of words, different word order in the FL, cognates, orthographical information, the title, and illustrations.
- (iii) guess the meaning of unknown words, from the context, looking up the word to evaluate their guesses afterwards.
- (iv) use their knowledge of the world.
- (v) have a good self-concept as a reader.

Hosenfeld shows a case study of a girl, a good achiever in a FL in terms of her grades but at the same time a poor reader, who has learned successful readers' reading strategies. Hosenfeld affirms the necessity of helping students learning to read in a FL. She said 'unassisted, many students learn strategies that impede

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their obtaining meaning efficiently from printed texts.³

OBJECTIVE FOR AN EFL READING CLASS:

In summary, the main objective for an EFL reading class is to foster a competent reader.

Outside the EFL reading class, students with different reading purposes will be confronted with various written texts, which may be unpredictable and diverse from student to student. Students must cope on their own with these unfamiliar texts. An EFL reading class, then, should prepare students for those future reading tasks.

Classroom activities as a whole should be designed to encourage students to equip themselves with a variety of skills and strategies.

The student is expected to become a competent reader who:

- knows what he needs; knows the reason for his reading.
- is capable of taking an appropriate, efficient approach to a written text in accordance with his purpose and the character of the text.
- is capable of dealing with new, unfamiliar texts of various kinds.
- knows what he understands and what he does not; knows how to deal with his difficulties and problems.

GUIDELINE:

The following points provide a general guideline for preparing reading activities:

- The level of English must be appropriate for the students' English competence, which is essential for choosing written texts.
- A reading text is to be read for a genuine purpose; i.e., it is read to know or to do something through reading it. It is read to get information, for pleasure, etc., but not for learning English.
- It is desirable that a reading text is taken from various kinds of written materials originally written for English native speakers, for these 'authentic' texts are what

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- students are supposed to read outside the classroom.
- Reading activities should reflect reality. The purpose for reading a certain text in class should be congruous with a reason for reading the text outside of class.
 - The purpose of the tasks should be clear enough for the students to realize their relation to certain skills and strategies for reading various text types.
 - Tasks should not teach English reading skills arbitrarily; they should be prepared in such a way as not to simply tell the students what to learn but to get them rather indirectly to lead to acquire necessary skills and strategies of reading by doing a meaningful activity.
 - Reading activities and tasks are to be prepared in order to help the process of the students' comprehension as well as to help them learn how to approach another reading text of the same kind which will be read for a similar purpose later.
 - The students should be encouraged always to exploit their background knowledge, which may include;
 - knowledge of the world, such as socio-cultural information about English-speaking countries as well as Japan.
 - knowledge on a specific topic of a text.
 - knowledge of the English language such as lexico-grammatical rules and conventions, etc.
 - The students should be encouraged to read with prediction and anticipation, always, based on their reading purpose.
 - They should also be encouraged to make guesses at any level of meaning by drawing on their own background knowledge and contextual clues.
 - Language activities may evolve as the occasion dictates, but should maintain helping students to comprehend a text.

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TASK SHEET (A)

Task (1) The students are asked to discuss the following in small group.

- Do you like sports?
- Do you practice any sport? Which is it?
- Why do you practice it?
- Is there any sport you want to try? Why?
- What sports do you think are popular among young people in Japan? Why are they so popular?
- Do you think that young people in English speaking countries also take up the same sports?

Task (2) The following input is given to the students.

- One of your friends is thinking of taking up exercising; Yet, he is particular about what kind of exercise.

He says;

- I need lots of exercise in a short time because my schedule is so tight. I cannot spend hours for it at a time.
- Also I'd like a sport which is simple and easy. I have no time to master certain basic skills required in advance.
- I'd like a sport which I can exercise whenever I like in any place with no special equipment or clothes.

(i) Now, you are probably familiar with the following sports. Which one (ones) of these would you recommend to your friend. Give your reasons.

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> fencing | <input type="checkbox"/> ping-pong | <input type="checkbox"/> jogging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> swimming | <input type="checkbox"/> basket-ball | <input type="checkbox"/> golf |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cycling | <input type="checkbox"/> mountaineering | |

Compare your answers with others'.

Task (3) Being given a text and the following input, the students are asked to work on it in pairs.

- You happen to see this article in a magazine.
- (i) Read the headline and the subtitle. Do you think this article provides you with relevant information for

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working on Task (2)?

- (ii) Read this article as quickly as possible to see whether cycling is a suitable sport for your friend. While reading underline unknown words.
- (iii) Compare the underlined words with your partner's and discuss whether you need to know their meanings to complete your task.

For the word (words) which you think you need the meanings, try to make a guess first, even if a vague one, considering the word's grammatical forms and contextual clues.

If there are words which still elude you, consult your monolingual dictionary.

- (iv) Read a paragraph (paragraphs) about the equipment for long-distance cycling; then complete the following chart in note form. For unknown words, follow the direction mentioned in (iii).

equipment	for what purpose/how to prepare
1. T-shirt	ride up your back
2. sweaters	
3. cap	
4. tracksuits	
5. jerseys	
.	
.	
.	

Comments on TASK SHEET (A):

Before reading the text, in Task (1) and (2), the students' knowledge on sports is activated. It gives them a frame to get them ready to think about the topic of the text. Also the task sheet gives the students to provide them with a purpose for reading.

In Task (3) the students anticipate the content of the article from the headline and judge whether it contains relevant information.

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The students will look for necessary information to prevent them from inefficient slow reading.

In guessing at unknown words, students may realize that (a) it is unnecessary for them to know the meaning of every word to accomplish their reading purpose and that (b) it is possible to use contextual clues to work out the meaning of unknown words. Thus, this exercise provides an effective pre-steps to dictionary consultation.

TASK SHEET (B):

Task (1) Divided into small groups, students discuss the following.

- What do you usually do when you try to choose a book, especially when you want to read something different?
- How do you know whether a book might be interesting to you or not?
- Have you ever tried an English book on your own? Was the content of the book similar to what you expected or different from your expectations?
- What kind of information do you think you need in order to make a decision to read a book? How and where can you get this information for a book under consideration?

Task (2) Students read a given text using the following instructions.

(i) Here is a copy of a book cover. Read it as quickly as possible and answer the following questions.

- Title: _____
- Author: _____
- Readers of this book are supposed to be:
 - adults
 - teenagers
 - children
- Why did you choose the above readers? Give at least two reasons.
- Can you find some words which tell you what type of story the book tells?

(ii) Here is the table of contents from the book.

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- Does this help you understand and predict the contents of the book more precisely?

- (iii) Do you think you might read this book? Would it interest you? Do you think you have enough information to decide whether you want to read this book or not?

Task (3) Students are given a list of book and also a separate listing of brief comments about the books. Working individually the students try to match the correct book titles with their comments; then, each student receives the following instructions:

- (i) Bookstores usually provide book reviews giving useful information for choosing books. Look at one example of a book review. What information does it give you about the book?
- (ii) Here is one copy of a book review, but the titles are separated and jumbled up. Can you match each title with its corresponding comments? Compare your results with your partner's.
- (iii) Which book(s) do you recommend to those who like...

- romance.....
- ghost/horror.....
- science fiction.....
- crime/detective.....
- western.....
- non-fiction/human interest.....
- adventure/spy.....

Compare your results with your partner's.

Task (4) Students discuss the following.

- What do you think about the activities? Are they useful to you when deciding which book to read?
- Do you usually examine the title, the short comments of explanation (blurb) on the book jacket and make use of the table of contents before you start reading a Japanese book?
- Do you see any differences between English books and Japanese books in lay out design for the information on the book cover? If so, describe the differences.

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Comments on TASK SHEET (B):

In Task (1), to activate the students' knowledge and their past experience, the discussion focuses students' attention on a topic which is also a purpose for reading here. This discussion prepares students to read the text.

In Task (2), the students practice using a title, other information on the book cover, and the table of contents to get an idea of a book's contents. Anticipation, prediction and scanning are skills involved here.

This activity will be helpful for the students not only in the future when they choose a book voluntarily but also any time when they start to read a book. The students assess the effectiveness of this activity on their own.

Task (3) is an activity similar to Task (2), practicing the same skills. The material shows students that reading English may be useful outside the classroom.

In the discussion of Task (4), the students learn the difference/similarity in conventional layout of book covers in Japanese and in English; consequently, students will discover or realise their own reading habits in Japanese.

NOTES:

¹L. Lautamatti, "Developing teaching reading comprehension in a foreign language," The Teaching of Communication, (1978), p.98.

²C. Hosenfeld, "Case studies of ninth grade readers," Reading in a Foreign Language, (1984), pp. 233-242.

³op. cit., pp.244.

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READING TEXT FOR TASK SHEET (A): Task (3)
GETTING STARTED

ON YOUR BIKE!

Think of a sport that's cheap, easy and energetic, that can keep you fit and still slot into your everyday routine.

Keith Bingham says—that's cycling

Do you have trouble finding a sport that slots into your busy routine? You just can't find an extra hour to go to a class or the odd half-hour to jog? Then how about cycling? It's cheap, healthy and fun, and can be as convenient as starting up the car or catching the train. It gets you about, keeps you fit and saves you money — wouldn't it be nice to halve your petrol bill or pocket all those bus fares and feel much better for it?

Yes? Well, on your bike then! If you learnt to ride as a child, you'll have no problems, though at first you might be as rusty as your old three-wheeler; but if you can't yet ride, then why not start now?

You might not like it, but there's no alternative to picking up a bike and having a go. It looks a bit ungainly, but if you stick with it, you can learn in a day, and it's well worth it. The best way to start is to find yourself a patch of grass — it's softer to fall on than concrete or tarmac and you'll find it easier to find a quiet piece of grass than a quiet stretch of road. You'll need a bike that suits your height, but at this stage its condition won't matter. Just make sure it has brakes! Then all you have to do is jump on, think 'upright' and pedal.

If you've never ridden before, you'll take a few knocks, but you'll soon get used to it.

Cycling is also an ideal form of aerobic exercise. It tones up your muscles, especially your legs, and gets heart and

lungs working. Like any aerobic exercise, you will have to keep it up vigorously for 10 minutes at a stretch at least, to feel the benefit. If you are planning to cycle a long distance, it is worth doing a few stretching exercises before you set off.

To gain the most from cycling you need to check your technique. You should be pedalling with the balls of your feet, not with your insteps. If you can't hold a conversation as you ride, then you are trying too hard. Whatever gear you choose to ride in, you should pedal at between 60 and 80 strokes per

minute. That pedalling rate will keep your respiratory system ticking over. At least 20 minutes a day, three times a week, is recommended to begin with. If you find that too much to begin with, you can always increase your cycling time progressively, doing a little at a time to build up, allowing your body to adjust to the increased work.

Like any aerobic exercise, cycling won't necessarily help you to lose weight — you can cycle all the way to Moscow on a stone of fat! What it will do is help turn the fat into muscle and lean tissue.

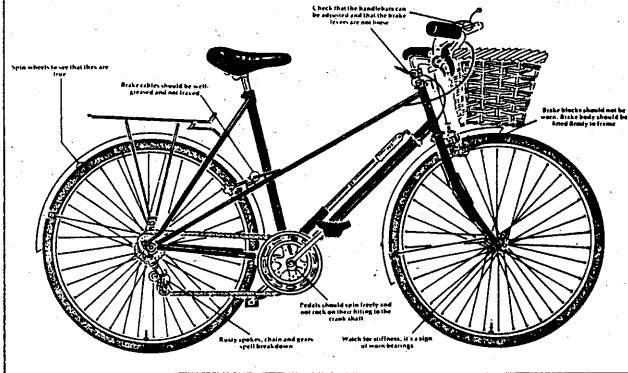
Finding the right equipment is important once you take up long-distance cycling. Ordinary T-shirts and sweaters ride up your back, leaving it exposed. Cycling tracksuits and jerseys are cut with ample length to cover the small of the back. Shoes should, as a general rule, have a fairly rigid sole to provide a firm platform for hard working feet.

Underwear is also important — you might like to wear thermals in cold weather. Thermals keep your skin relatively dry because they transfer moisture to the next layer of clothing and at the same time retain body heat. Heat is energy, and you will need reserves of that — look after it by keeping warm.

In cold weather, it's a good idea to go for layers rather than thickness when choosing your clothes. This will make it easier to regulate your temperature. When muscles get cold they will complain by cramping up. Err on the warm side and peel off the layers if you overheat. If you still feel the cold, try wearing a hat: 80 per cent of body heat is lost through your head.

It is very important to be seen when you're out riding. Fluorescent bands are a good idea and you can buy them from most cycling shops. Pedal re-

Second-hand bike checklist



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READING TEXT FOR TASK SHEET (B): Task (2), (i)



Enid Blyton THE SECRET SEVEN

SECRET 7

The Secret Seven have thrilling adventures — read this book and take part in one with them!

In this their first adventure, the Secret Seven get on the trail of strange clues which lead them in disguise, through the snow, to the old house, and mystery . . .

KNIGHT BOOKS

United Kingdom 50p
Australia \$3.95
New Zealand \$3.95
Price of this book 50p
Recommended for use in primary schools
ISBN 0 340 04156 0

ADVENTURE NO 1

1 041560

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READING TEXT FOR TASK SHEET (B): Task (2), (ii)

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READING TEXT FOR TASK SHEET (B): Task (3), (i)

INT(22) The Great Gatsby

by F. SCOTT FITZGERALD, retold by MARGARET TARNER

F. Scott Fitzgerald's famous story of the wealthy and enigmatic Jay Gatsby and his love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan.

It is 1922 and Nick Carraway returns from the war to work in New York. He buys a house on Long Island about twenty miles from New York. The house next to his has beautiful grounds and a swimming pool and is owned by the fabulously rich and handsome Jay Gatsby. Nick has not been in the East long when he receives an invitation from his cousin Daisy. Daisy is young, beautiful and desperately unhappy. She is married to the boorish and unfaithful Tom Buchanan. Nick soon finds himself the intermediary between the reunited lovers, Daisy and Gatsby. And eventually the unwilling witness to their tragic affair. Recommended for older students.

1979 80pp 435 27059 1



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READING TEXT FOR TASK SHEET (B): Task (3), (ii)

INT(28) Alone on the Atlantic
The Clare Francis Story, retold by MONICA VINCENT

INT(18) A Town Like Alice
by NEVIL SHUTE, retold by D. R. HILL

† **INT(29) The Peacemakers**
by DUNCAN FORBES

† **INT(23) The Walker After Death**
by BARRIE ELLIS-JONES

INT(1) Shane
by JACK SCHAEFER, retold by JOHN MILNE

† **INT(24) The Space Invaders**
by GEOFFREY MATTHEWS

† **INT(7) Football**
by DUNCAN SCOTT-FORBES

† **INT(11) The Woman Who Disappeared**
by PHILIP PROWSE

† **INT(19) The Queen of Death**
by JOHN MILNE

In 1976, Clare Francis was the first British girl to enter the *Observer* Royal Western Singlehanded Transatlantic Race. She sailed her 38-foot boat, *Robertson's Golly* through two gales, a storm, fog, 35-foot high waves and icebergs. She completed the course in 29 days and won the prize for the fastest woman competitor. Illustrated with maps, diagrams and photographs. Recommended for girls.

The Nobel Prize for Peace was first awarded in 1901. Since then it has been given to over seventy different individuals and organizations. This book explains how Alfred Nobel came to initiate the Nobel Prizes and tells the stories of five of its well-known recipients – Albert Schweitzer, Dag Hammarskjöld, Henri Dunant, Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa.

1982 64pp 435 27081 8

Readers who enjoyed *The Black Car* (E2) and who are making the transition from Elementary to Intermediate levels will find this new adventure of Salahadin El Nur will give a booster to their confidence in their reading ability as well as providing a thoroughly entertaining detective story.

Salahadin (now a Chief Inspector) travels between Cairo, London and Luxor. With the help of his assistant and a friend, he searches for the answer to the riddle of an ancient curse and tries to locate an English professor who he suspects of being involved with a gang of ruthless smugglers.

1979 80pp 435.27049 4


A fascinating account of the world's major sport. Fully illustrated and containing a list of special subject vocabulary, this extremely popular title covers all aspects of the game. It begins by explaining the rules and requirements of the sport, including the meanings of various terms and game moves.

In this story set sometime in the future, Varon – an intergalactic thief and pirate – attempts to steal one of the most valuable crystals in the universe. He breaks into the strongroom of the planet Zeron and manages to obtain the most potent form of power known. But his source of information has not told him the whole story and he is trapped in a swamp, unable to return to his spaceship. Until that is, the timely arrival of Omega. But then Omega has his reasons for helping Varon, too.

1980 64pp 435 27072 9

A tongue-in-cheek story of the adventures of a Los Angeles private detective. A beautiful blonde woman hires Lenny Samuel to find her missing sister. Before too long the stage also contains gunmen, dead bodies, world-weary policemen and jewel thieves. And all the while, Lenny Samuel dodges the bullets, speeding cars and flying fists.

1975 64pp 435 27011 7

 435 27065 6

What starts off by being an ordinary family holiday turns into a horrifying experience for everyone concerned. The Dainton family are staying in a remote farmhouse on the west coast of Scotland for two weeks. The children, Sue and Ian are resentful. They do not want to go on holiday with their parents and are convinced it will be boring. Shortly after their arrival, they are proved very wrong. From the moment Sue accidentally uncovers an ancient skeleton, the Daintons find themselves the victims of a powerful and destructive force of evil which threatens the lives and sanity of everyone involved.

A compelling and forcefully written ghost story.

1979 64pp 435 27058 3

Jean Paget is in Malaya in 1941 when the Japanese army invades. Within a few days of the Japanese take-over, Jean is sent on an enforced road march to a women's prisoner-of-war camp. The walk, under armed escort, lasts for two years. In a chance encounter by the roadside, Jean meets an Australian prisoner, Joe Harmon. Joe and his friend take many risks in order to obtain food and medicines for the women. After the war, Jean returns to England. She believes Joe to be dead. Then she hears that Joe is alive and living in Alice Springs, Australia. She sets out to search for him. This book, one of Shute's most moving and popular novels, has twice been made into a film.

1977 96pp 435 27048 6

This hugely successful retold version of Schaefer's classic western has sold over 400,000 copies. The story of Shane, a hero in the traditional western mould, is told by a young boy, Bob. Bob's father is one of the newly settled homestead farmers, despised and persecuted by the rich, land-owning cattle rancher, Fletcher. Soon after his arrival, Shane champions the family's cause against Fletcher's hired killer, Stark Wilson.

1973 96pp 435 27001 X