

A Fun Reading Comprehension Activity

Mehmet Ali Akgün
[makgun \[at\] indiana.edu](mailto:makgun[at]indiana.edu)

Many EFL teachers are familiar with the type of reading comprehension exercise in which students are required to read the passage and then answer a set of multiple-choice questions. No matter how hard you may try to make this type of reading fun and comprehensible to the learners by brainstorming activities or drawing flowers on the board, you know that, after a while, you may end up with a boring reading class in which your students are not 'reading for comprehension', not 'enjoying themselves', not 'learning new words in context', not 'practicing their grammar', and not 'involved in a communicative and interactive learning activity'. Does all of this sound familiar. If so, you can achieve all of the above and maybe more with this very simple, easy-to-prepare activity.

Preparation

Find an interesting text, which you think may appeal to most of your students such as a joke from a magazine, a brochure about Disneyland, or anything that is colorful and fun. Then, type that passage on a page using large margins so that the text itself is not spread from one end to the other but rather it is squeezed up into a thin column.

Make enough copies to go around and then grab a pair of scissors as you go to class.

In Class

After you tell your students you want them to read a passage and probably after a few groans and long faces here and there, in front of the whole class - now comes the fun part- take out the papers and the scissors. Even the sight of the scissors will signal to the students that they will be doing something different that day. Then, cut along a line so that the last one or two words at the end of each line are cut off.

Hand out the papers and ask the students to read the text and try to find the missing word(s) for about five minutes. You can tell them to work in pairs or groups and discuss it. They will engage in a true communicative negotiation while they are attempting to prove to the others that what they have come up with as the answer is correct. After you let them work for a while, you will hear the words they have found. You will be amazed to find out how creative they may become when they shout out words that are not the originals but are quite correct as alternatives.

Let's see what kind of language skills all this involves.

- First, they will be reading for comprehension.
- Second, they will have to think of words/phrases, which calls for both their passive and active vocabulary stocks.
- Third, they will also have to practice their spelling.
- Fourth, they will absolutely use their grammar knowledge since they will need to know the parts of speech to guess the words.
- Fifth, they will practice speaking and listening while they are discussing in pairs and will have the opportunity to learn the different ways that others reason things.

Level

Perhaps the second best point about this activity, other than the fact that you combine very different skills of language learning within one simple task, may be that you can easily adapt it to the needs of different levels.

If you have beginners, you may pick up an easy passage and you cut out only one word or maybe half off the end of the lines. With more proficient learners, not only will you choose more advanced texts but also you may leave out more words or perhaps half of the sentences, which will bring more challenge and require more creativity as well as a much better command of the language.

Options

A writing component may be added. If you also cut out the last two or three sentences at the end of the passage, you may assign the students to complete the rest at home using their imagination. You may do this activity for 10 minutes at the end of the class time which allows you to finish up with something fun and wholesome or you may spend one complete class hour on it for a full-length reading class.

Conclusion

As with all language learning tasks out there, you must give it a try in your classes before you make the necessary changes according to the specific needs and attitudes of your own students.

Personal Info

Mehmet Ali Akgün has taught EFL in Turkey and is currently in the Ph.D. program in Language Education at Indiana University, Bloomington.

The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. III, No. 10, October 1997

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