



CAPE Alumni Internet Connection: English Teacher Talk

CAPE Internet Talk was started as part of CAPE follow-up activities to continue ties with CAPE alumni and those who are interested in professional development in English teaching. It is hoped that this would increase our bond and aloha among former participants, and that the information in the TALK would help our alumni and friends/members review what they know and deepen their understanding of issues and interest in the ESL field.

An Extensive Reading Library

Richard R. Day

Introduction

I had just finished a workshop on extensive reading for EFL teachers in Korea. Two teachers approached me, somewhat shyly, and, in careful English, thanked me for the workshop and said they had learned much useful information about reading. But, they wondered, what should their students read?

My response to those two EFL teachers is the basis of this article, the third of a series of articles on extensive reading. In the first two articles, I discussed the nature of extensive reading and how to put extensive reading into the curriculum. The fourth and final article will present a variety of activities that teachers can use after their students have finished reading their books.

Building a Library of Reading Materials

The first task for teachers who want students who both can and do read in English is to find materials that their students will find easy and interesting to read. When selecting reading materials for any age group and ability level, teachers must think first about the interests of their students. Because the students need to read as much as possible, the books must appeal to them.

In addition to selecting high-interest materials, teachers should try to have a wide variety of genre—of different types of books. For example, some students might want to read mystery or detective stories while others might enjoy reading romance or science fiction. Others might be attracted to nonfiction, such as biography.

Materials for Beginning and Intermediate Students

For beginning and intermediate adult and adolescent learners of English, by far the most suitable reading materials are books, magazines and newspapers especially written for EFL learners. This *language learner literature* is published in growing quantity, variety and sophistication by both local and global publishers. They are usually called *graded readers*. There are hundreds of attractive fiction and non-fiction books appropriate to students of various ages and interests, including folk tales and science fiction, thrillers adapted from best-selling writers like John Grisham, classics, travel guides and novels based on popular movies or TV shows like *Baywatch*. Titles of books are listed in the catalogs of such publishers as Oxford University Press, Longman (Penguin), and Heinemann. To make selection easier, the appendix of Day and Bamford (1998) includes a bibliography of 600 titles of high-quality language learner literature in English divided by student ability level (pp. 174-217).

In addition, a useful source of reading material is books and magazines produced for native-speaking children and teenagers. Children's books, with big print and colorful illustrations, are relatively easy for EFL learners to read, and some like Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* and Ezra Jack Keats' *The Snowy Day* have much to say to older learners. Best of all, they are short; some can be read in a few minutes. Popular teen literature, such as novels by Judy Blume (e.g., *Deenie; It's Not the End of the World*) and Paula Danziger (e.g., *The Cat Ate My Gynsuit*), are often much enjoyed by high-intermediate learners of all ages.

Materials for High-Intermediate and Advanced Students

If money is available, the task of building a library is relatively straightforward. High-intermediate and advanced students will probably enjoy reading carefully chosen English-language books, newspapers, and magazines. A subscription to a local English-language newspaper, or one published internationally such as *The International Herald Tribune* or *USA Today*, is sure to be appreciated by many students. Magazines are also popular: general interest magazines such as *People* with its celebrity interviews and gossip, or specialized magazines according to students' interests. If reading materials are in the students' fields of interest, comprehension is made easier by the students' knowledge of the subject matter.

Materials for Children

Reading material for children learning English must be chosen so that they will be both understood and enjoyed. Many of the publishers have a wide selection of graded readers specially written for children. Also, carefully-selected books of children's literature can provide the core of a library, and both Brown (1994) and Allen's 1994 article *Selecting Materials for the Reading Instruction of ESL Children* have lengthy bibliographies of suggested titles (pp. 128-131).

Conclusion

Materials are the heart and soul of an extensive reading program. Teachers need to make sure that their students have a wide variety of interesting books and other material that appeal to their students.

References

- Allen, V. G. 1994. Selecting materials for the reading instruction of ESL children. In K. Spangenberg-Urbschat & R. Pritchard (Eds.), *Kids come in all languages: Reading instruction for ESL students*, (pp. 108-131). Newark, DE:
- Brown, D. S. 1988. *A world of books: An annotated reading list for ESL/EFL students* (2nd ed.). Washington DC: TESOL.
- Day, R. R. and J. Bamford. 1998. *Extensive reading in the second language classroom*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Please take the time to give us the addresses of anyone else you think might be interested in receiving this newsletter of the CAPE Internet Connection: English Teacher Talk. And don't forget to write us with any comments you might have. Mahalo!

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