Extensive Reading Work Project (part1)


1. JUSTIFICATION

Do you like reading? I love reading, when I come across a book, my imagination flies and my conscience wakes up, it’s such a wonderful feeling. Nevertheless, I relate this special moment to a moment of solitude. Do you remember when we used to go to school and it was time to read? Two readers per year in every language subject. I remember reading them during the summer as soon as the book list was made public in order to associate reading with pleasure and not to a task that I had to endure during a month at least. I’m not denying that I actually discovered the best classic novels of all times and really moved me. But when I look back, I realise that I didn’t enjoy those lessons at all and when I found myself making the exact same mistake I wondered: ‘Why am I doing this?’ So I decided to go back to square one and try something new and different.

A). Task Based Learning (TBL)

If we’re talking about extensive reading it’s pretty obvious that the project work is based on reading but why not involving other skills like speaking and writing? In fact, Task Based Learning (TBL) brings us the opportunity to create a series of lessons based around a central task and the language studied is determined by what happens as the student complete it. This technique has got a strong communicative approach, being both enjoyable and motivating to watch how much time the students communicating during a task based lesson. Therefore, this extensive reading project is composed by four task-based-lessons done at the end of six classes. The personality and placement test will take you a session more. All in all, seven sessions will be needed. Give yourself a week at least to correct the tests and choose the right book for them.

B). Plagiarism

In the digital era, plagiarism has become an issue. Intellectual property has been endangered many times since we want to share everything and make available to everybody. Internet browsers are an excellent tool for research but it also makes students lazy... And I totally get it: why should they make any effort when someone has already done all the work and shared in www.sparknotes.com or www.rincondelvago.es? And even when internet didn’t exist, plagiarism did exist. Don’t you remember people copying someone’s else notes in order to study for the reading exam? So, instead of choosing a well-known literature book adaptation, select original work and instead of forcing the students to read the exact same book, pick up a different one for each of them. I don’t blame if you find it very time-demanding but you’ll avoid many problems at the end and the result is far more satisfying for you and for them, trust me.

Our school library is mainly composed by donations and book samples generously given by editorials. Along the years, we’ve been able to put on the shelves plenty of them and to classify them per level. We just let know the other English teachers when and how long we’re going to do the extensive reading project. In fact, every class has got multi-level learners, therefore this diversification will also be pretty beneficial for all of them.
2. MOTIVATION

A). Get to know your students

I personally love the Orwell’s distopia novel, 1984 and I think it’s an essential piece of the Universal Literature. However, THIS is my point of view not theirs. Who am I to know what they are going to like? That’s why I make them do two different kinds of test without saying that is for the project, it’s just a personality and level test, that’s all. At this stage, ask your student a series of questions in order to know them better. A good way would be to ask about their 3 favourite movies, series, books, etc...and then make them talk about it in class. It’s important to encourage them to express what the plot is about, why they’ve liked this film and not another one, etc. Tell them to note the readers they have already read, it might be useful to not repeat a novel they’ve read in previous courses! Depending on the personality, some will highlight features that the other would have never noticed before. Then, devote the second half of the hour to 3 exercises PET Reading exam as a placement test. You’ll probably need to follow these instructions: choose any previous PET (B1) exam samples but each exercise should be taken from a different one, just in case a student might have taken this exam in particular. Five very short texts (they may be signs and messages, postcards, notes, emails, labels, etc.) will be presented in the first exercise, they have to read them and choose which of the three sentences (A, B or C) is the best description of the text in that way we can find out if the student knows to read notices and other short texts to understand the main message. Then, five short descriptions of people and eight short texts to read will be presented to the candidates and they have to match each person to a text in order to find specific information. Later, they'll read long text and ten sentences about the text and they have to say if each sentence is true or false. Here, they show if they are able to read a text quickly to find out information. Last but not least, a multiple choice practice with a long text and five questions and have to read the text and choose the right answer (A, B, C or D) for each of the five questions and you’ll find out if they can understand the detail of a text. Calculate the exam over ten, the students who get over 7’5 will read a B2.2 adapted reader, between 7’5 and 5 level B2.1, 5 to 3 B1.2 and below B1.1.

B). Make them feel unique

Both personality and the placement test will help you to get a better idea of your student’s needs. In order to make the right choice, the graded reader must match theirs interests but their reading skills too. If the book is too easy or too difficult, they'll lose interest in reading and they'll find the extensive reading project quite boring.

In addition, the fact that instead of forcing them to read you tell them that you think this or that book would be best for him or her, you'll make them feel unique and the motivation would be higher. And it’s a great way to avoid plagiarism and to attend the diversity in class. Reaching the highest level of reading skills is not the purpose here, a great importance is given to the procedure and the progress. Each of them will be running different races but at the same speed, in a way of speaking.

3. SCHEME OF WORK

A). Time Management

Extensive reading can be quite tough to endure during the school year, so try to schedule it right before Christmas and Easter holidays since you've got to introduce two readers a year. The week before leaving would perfect timing to present the tasks to do and a 20-minutes-reading time per class. That'll make an hour of
reading right before the holidays. You’ll see that they’ll have questions about vocabulary and reading comprehension but don’t panic, they just need to set up the beginning, then the reading time at home won’t rise as many doubts as the start. Help them to guess by the context or the word root or origin. A mind map with the character would be a great suggestion to give to understand the plot better. While the individual reading and if there’s no questions, give example and read a fiction novel on your own, this will make them more motivated to do so. Recent studies have shown that kids read more if they see people around them reading too. The core of the reading will be done during the holidays and the comprehension questions given but do not force them to answer them, they’ll be able to do it in class back from holidays during the same amount of time as before: 20 minutes at the end of each class for one week. Ask them to hand back the paper the forth session after holiday.

B). Research

Some context is needed to further understanding, so when they figure out what the book is about, where and when it takes place, ask them to suggest you, individually, a topic to do a research on. If is the Brontë novel, a topic to write about could be 'British women in the 18th century' or a Poe’s Black Cat: 'Alcoholism in the USA', 'American Superstitions', etc. Remind them that plagiarism will be penalised with a 0 and they must look at reliable sources. Websites visited, books or any other resources consulted will have to be noted at the end of the writing. A 300 to 500 words writing would be enough.

Later, ask them to write a biography of the author with their own words, depicting the most relevant facts of the author’s life and career according to the novel. A paragraph with a list or curious facts could be welcome and they’ll appreciate it because they'll remember better.

Stay tuned for part 2!

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**Bibliografia**

www.teachingenglish.org.uk

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