

humour of the texts, and the characteristics of a good joke teller. In the production stage, students were expected to think of a joke in their mother tongue and tell it in English. There was mention of the cultural aspects of humour, including translation issues, but stereotypes were also disseminated.

Finally, the two remaining books were part of the same series. Although one book only contained two cartoons, the other contained a whole unit on humour. This unit, which integrated all skills, comprised cartoons, jokes, and articles about the theories of humour and the health benefits of laughter. The book also mentioned situations when it is appropriate to laugh, and it presented typical reactions to humour. The activities went beyond just reading an example of a joke, and also aimed at showing how humour works.

Conclusions

The findings of this qualitative analysis showed the reduced number of humorous texts in the pedagogical materials investigated. Most activities dealt primarily with text comprehension, without reference to humour. Although students were expected to produce humour, either by writing humorous texts or by telling jokes, they were not introduced to the mechanisms which create it. In terms of pragmatics, there were few tips as to when humour is appropriate and how to react to humorous remarks. Despite the pervasiveness of humour in modern society, it seems that the topic is still overlooked in ELT published materials. More importantly, the activities found in these coursebooks fail to address the issues raised by research in the area, such as the focus on form and meaning, as well as the importance of raising students' awareness to pragmatic aspects of humour. Teachers and writers should bear in mind the importance of such elements when adapting global coursebooks to the local needs of their classrooms.

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5.3 Symposium on the creation of a culture of reading

Convenor: Daniel Xerri *University of Malta, Msida, Malta* with
Rhoda McGraw *Ecole des Ponts ParisTech, Paris, France*; **Vanessa Esteves**
Escola Superior de Educacao, Oporto, Portugal; **Robert Campbell** *Freelance,*
Barcelona, Spain; and **Mark Brierley** *Shinshu University, Matsumoto, Japan*.

Introduction

The creation of a culture of reading induces students to move from a dependence on the teacher to the cultivation of a greater sense of autonomy. Research suggests that

extensive reading leads to an improvement in word recognition, increased motivation, faster reading speed, inductive learning of reading strategies, and a development in students' ability to use context for comprehension. The strategic use of graded readers and other texts capitalises on the contributions made by L2 learners and helps to improve their reading in English by equipping them with skills that allow them to read more broadly. This symposium evaluated different ways to promote a heightened sense of reading engagement inside and outside the classroom.

Teaching and extensive reading

Daniel Xerri argued that the stance adopted by teachers could be one of the challenges in the creation of a culture of reading. If teachers do not act as passionate readers, students will not be able to see them as role models. In fact, 'Effective extensive reading teachers are themselves readers, teaching *by example* the attitudes and behaviours of a reader' (Day and Bamford 2002: 140).

Focusing on poetry as an example of a reading genre, Daniel spoke about a study he carried out amongst teachers and L2 learners of English in Malta. This study shows that teachers tend to avoid talking about their reading habits in class. Interviewed students indicated that they were unaware of whether their teachers read any poetry, some of them assuming that 'it's sort of necessary to read poetry if you're an English teacher'. Students claimed that very few teachers ever shared their reading experiences with them; the majority of students expressed the desire that this should happen more often. In their opinion, 'teachers have a huge influence, so it would help many students to take the initiative to read more poetry' if they knew that their teachers enjoyed doing so. Students declared that they perceived teachers as readers whom they 'trust' and hence they appreciated their suggestions in terms of which books to read. These students' views seem to give weight to the idea that when teachers position themselves as fellow readers forming part of a classroom reading community, students are provided with the impetus to engage in extensive reading.

Rhoda McGraw spoke about how she has made free silent reading periods an integral part of her mixed-level, content-based English courses for students in French higher education. The courses usually consist of 10 or more two-hour sessions devoted to one subject, such as sustainable development or cinema. For five to twenty minutes out of a lesson, learners read any text they choose from a collection she supplies. The content of the collection depends on the subject of the course, but there are always various types of documents: books, magazines, brochures, newspapers, and texts from the Internet, as well as photocopies of articles or stories. Simplified readers and learners' writing are also included. Class members read as many different texts as they wish, whether in part or in entirety. Apart from very brief oral reports, often given in small groups, no exercises are proposed. While students are encouraged to take texts home, they are not required to do so.

After describing the reading periods and offering specific ideas for implementing them, Rhoda discussed how they seem to promote more sustained and focused extensive reading both inside and outside the classroom (Garan and DeVoogd 2008). She further suggested that they may help to capture and channel subject interest, thereby allowing students to engage in learning and to express and develop their individual identities.

Vanessa Esteves underscored the idea that reading is one of the fundamental core skills in our lives by maintaining that it is a gateway to a limitless world of achievement and success. But how does one convince the so-called unteachable students to read? According to Kottler (2002) these students are usually highly demotivated, uncooperative, hostile, and even resistant. Consequently, convincing them to read requires presenting the act of reading as a truly magical experience.

In order to motivate these students to read, the teacher should begin by mirroring the desired behaviour and actually reading to them in class. This should be done in a very dramatic manner so as to hook them into the story. Once this has been done the teacher should be very careful not to destroy this magical effect by assessing students' comprehension in a traditional manner. Instead, at this stage the teacher should introduce various fun and communicative activities, which help students to apply the language that has been picked up whilst sharing personal ideas and opinions with the class. Finally, as students slowly become convinced of the joys of reading, the teacher should set up a class library in order to guarantee that students have access to future magical and enchanting experiences on their own.

Writing and selecting graded readers

Robert Campbell recalled how at the Edinburgh Book Festival in 2010 he attended two presentations on the future of books and publishing. He was left wondering that no one really knows what the future of books is, and he realised that this is a really exciting time to be a writer.

One of the biggest changes of recent years is that reading is no longer a one-way activity. In the past, the author would write a book, the publisher would sell it, and the reader would read it. With the Internet and social media, it is normal for readers to write their own reviews, post comments on what they read, and write to the author. Almost every online newspaper story or piece of information on the Internet allows the reader to respond, comment, like, share, or participate in some way. This is something ELT authors and publishers can use and develop.

After having written a graded reader, Robert was contacted by an Italian teacher who had asked her students to write a sequel which she had then published on the school website. The class's achievement subsequently featured in a major national newspaper. This is a clear example of how students can become active rather than passive readers. By offering students more ways to interact and immerse themselves in the worlds created by writers, the reading experience can be enhanced and more people encouraged to read.

Mark Brierley spoke about the Extensive Reading Foundation Online Self-Placement Test, which has been developed to gauge the level of text at which readers can read fluently. The test shows readers a series of texts, each followed by comprehension questions, checking they have understood the main points of the story, and impressionistic questions, gauging how they feel about the difficulty of the text, and the speed they were able to read at. The reading is timed, and if the actual reading speed is very slow, the text is being read with little fluency and is therefore above the level of the reader; if the speed is very fast, the text is probably not being read at all. Subsequent texts are chosen based on the reading speed, comprehension scores and

impressionistic scores, becoming easier or more difficult as appropriate. Finally an algorithm uses a combination of this data to evaluate the level of books that the reader can read. Real texts from graded readers were provided by a number of publishers so test-takers come across the same kinds of texts they will meet in extensive reading.

The test (<https://erfospt.ealps.shinshu-u.ac.jp>) is initially targeted at Japanese learners of English, but will later be localised for learners from different language backgrounds. Teachers can help with the development of this test by choosing texts, creating questions, processing data, or just administering the test to their students.

The symposium was enriched throughout by contributions from a lively and well-informed audience, suggesting that many of those present shared the speakers' commitment to creating a culture of reading for English language learners.

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5.4 Extensive reading for reluctant EFL readers

Eleanor Kane *University of Shimane, Hamada, Japan*

According to PISA's 2011 report, 'Do students today read for pleasure?', the percentage of students who read in their free time dropped in the majority of OECD countries between 2000 and 2009. If many students do not read in their L1, how can English teachers persuade them to read in a foreign language?

Extensive Reading (ER) counteracts the English print-poor environments of many EFL learners while Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) secures time to read for busy students. When research by the Japan School Library Association, for example, shows that in 2010 almost half of Japanese high school students read no books in their L1 for pleasure whatsoever, ER and SSR can make a huge difference to learners' literacy in English—which increasingly corresponds to better life chances after graduation. But simply allocating time and books is not enough for reluctant EFL readers. My poster showed four ways to improve EFL reading skills with less proficient adult learners: SSR, phonics training, buddy reading and communicative reading tasks.

Sustained Silent Reading

SSR secures more time for reading than traditional ER assigned as homework. Students at the University of Shimane have twice weekly 45-minute sessions of SSR