**Making Reading Comprehension More Accessible**

Our aim as teachers is to make the students feel comfortable with the language and to enable them to progress as much as possible.

One of the ways we do this is often via reading comprehension. It’s a very useful tool and it enriches the students’ language in a relatively simple manner.

But we have to do it right. We have to take advantage of every text we bring into class.

We have to keep in mind a few simple points:

* Your students are beginners or intermediate at best.
* Reading in a foreign language is daunting enough without being put on the spot.
* Research shows that we need at least 9 meaningful encounters with a vocabulary item to make it accessible to us and to enable acquisition
* The more our students reread something, the higher their comprehension of it will be.
* Reading aloud is useful when the teacher does it OR when the student is reading to him/herself.

Reading Aloud – Good and Bad

On the one hand…

* Reading aloud is something less proficient readers do naturally to enable themselves to hear what they are deciphering.
* Reading aloud may be useful when done in a non-stressful environment, with no time constraints and no pressure to perform.
* Reading aloud is easier to do with a passage that has been viewed before, either via scanning, skimming or full reading.
* Reading aloud becomes easier with each successive reading of the same passage.

On the other hand…

* Reading aloud something you’ve never seen before is bound to be less successful.
* A student reading aloud in class is more focused on deciphering what is written correctly in order to save face than on understanding what he/she is reading.
* A student reading aloud in class tends to read to his / her desk so that no one else can share the reading.
* When a student reads aloud, the others are meant to follow, which is a near impossibility most times.
* Reading aloud is stressful for many ESL / EFL students

So what do we do in class?

* Before actually bringing the text to class, divide the text into sections for yourself.
* Go through the text and ask as many questions as you can about the content, about each line.

First: Pre-reading

* Before you read a text with the class, ALWAYS do some sort of pre-reading activity.
* The purpose of a pre-reading activity is prediction and familiarity with the topic.
* The Ultimate Question is, “So, what do you think the story / passage is about?”
* Pre-reading ideas:
  + Show title and ask the Ultimate Question
  + Present a few words from the passage
  + Present a few words from the passage and a few familiar words not from the passage
  + Show a picture (if available) or a series of pictures

Second: While Reading

* A few options:
  + Divide text into sections, ask leading question about each bit and have the students read silently.
  + You read each section aloud and then ask questions
  + Ask a leading question and then read aloud the relevant section
* After each option, go through the entire text, bit by bit, either having the class read quietly or you read aloud ask many other questions to enable comprehension and multiple readings of the same section of the text.
* The aim is to enable comprehension by all via discussion, scanning, skimming and rereading of the text.
* To enable them to read aloud (simply because some of them like it) ask them to read the line where they found the answer.
* At the end ask general questions to make sure they all understood the text.
  + What can we learn from this text?
  + Did you enjoy the story? Why? Why not?
  + What was your favorite part?
  + What didn’t you understand?

Example of text with questions for while reading:

**The Three Sons of The King**

Once there lived a king called Ralph. He had three sons. The first son was Sam. The second was John and the third was Eric.   
  
The king on his death bed wanted to test his three sons He asked them to come the next day in the court.   
  
The king said that he was on his death bed and wanted to test them. He asked them to fill the entire room with something and whoever does completely will become the king, he said.   
  
The first son brought diamonds which filled half the room. The second son filled the room with cotton but it was not sufficient. The third kept a lamp in the middle of the room. It spread light in the whole room.   
  
The king appreciated Eric and decided that he will be the king.   
The two sons were ashamed of themselves as their younger brother defeated them.   
Then, the king died and Eric became the king.

Para. 1

Who is Ralph?

What does he have?

Who is Sam?

Which son is John?

Who is Eric?

What are Sam, John and Eric?

When does this story take place?

Para. 2

What happens to the king?

What is a death bed?

What does he want to do with his sons?

Where does he ask the boys to come?

Why does he ask the boys to come to the court?

Para. 5 till end

Who is Eric?

When will Eric be king?

Why does the father want Eric to be king?

How do the other two brothers feel?

Why do they feel ashamed?

What does the younger brother do better than the older brothers?

What happens at the end?

Para. 3

What does the king ask his sons to do?

What does ‘to fill the entire room’ mean?

What does the king want them to fill the entire room with?

Why does the king want to test the boys?

Where is the king?

What will happen to him?

What will the son who does what his father asks get?

What do you think happens next?

.Para. 4

What does the first son bring?

Is it enough?

How much of the room do the diamonds fill?

What does the second son bring?

Is it enough?

How much of the room does the cotton fill?

So what does ‘not sufficient’ mean?

What does the third son bring?

Where does he put the lamp?

Does it fill the whole room?

Why do you think it worked?