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EXERCISES AND MATERIAL FOR TEACHING READING IN ENGLISH

I.S.P. Nation*

Reading exercises does the following things:

A good language teaching exercise does the following things:

- 1 It interests and challenges the learners.
- 2 It gives the learners a lot of useful language work.
- 3 It provides plenty of opportunity for learning and repetition.

It does not give the teacher too much work to do either in preparing, presenting, or marking.

You can decide if they are good language teaching exercises or not.

Let us look at some exercises for teaching reading. You can decide if they are good language teaching exercises or not.

1 Questions. A common way of testing reading is to give questions after a passage for the learners to answer. Usually the learners have to answer in English. This exercise makes the learners pay attention to language. They have to read the questions and have to write the answers. The exercise makes the learners work hard to find the answers and they certainly have to write the questions. Then they use English to write the answers in English is difficult. Learners work hard to find the answers and they certainly have to write the answers in English. Most students find that writing in English is difficult. Often it takes more time to write the answer to a question in English than it does to find the answer in the passage. Sometimes teachers make easy questions so that the learners just have to copy the answer from the passage. But if the questions are too easy the exercise is not very useful. It does not really test the students' understanding of the reading passage. One way of avoiding the problem is to let the learners write their answers in the mother-tongue. A recent experiment (Laufer, 1978) compared the learning done by students who wrote answers in English with the learning done by students who wrote in the mother-tongue. The experiment showed that answer in the questions in the mother-tongue did not have a bad effect on the reading skill of the students. The teachers found that the students were happier because they felt it was a fairer way to check their reading. The students also had more time for reading because they did not spend a long time writing answers in English. If the learners answer in English the exercise is sometimes difficult to mark because the students make grammar and spelling mistakes in their answers. If the answers are in the mother-tongue, marking is easier. Yes/No questions and True/False sentences are very easy to mark. In fact, the students can easily mark their own work from an answer key.

*I.S.P. Nation English Language Institute, Victoria University of Wellington
New Zealand

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Usually questions come at the end of a passage. Some reading courses use 'before questions' and 'inserted questions'. 'Before questions' are given before the passage or part of the passage which contains the answers. The student reads the questions (usually no more than 2 or 3 questions) and then reads the passage to find the answers. Because the learner knows the questions that he has to answer, he reads the passage with a purpose. West (1941) describes this type of reading as reading with "a searching attitude". West believed that reading with a searching attitude was very important in improving speed and comprehension. 'Inserted questions' are put after each paragraph or after every five or six sentences. In this way the students can check their comprehension while they read.

2 Which meaning? Most English words have many meanings. The word that can mean 100 or 1000 Going to can mean 100 or 1000. These words with two or more meanings cause serious problems for students who are learning to read English. Students need to learn to recognize the signals that show which meaning is being used. For example, when going to is followed by a noun going to the shop, it means 100. When going to is followed by a verb, going to sing, it means 1000. The following exercise gives practice in distinguishing two meanings of a word.

Make

The verb make has several meanings. This exercise will help you to recognize two of their meanings. The two meanings have numbers in front of them. Write 1 next to each sentence where make has the same meaning as in 1 below. Write 2 next to each sentence where make has the same meaning as in 2 below. Use the grammar to help you find the right meaning.

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1 make + noun | He made a decision. |
| () | |
| 2 make + noun + adjective | I made him angry. |
| () | Work makes me tired. |
| | non-finite stem |
| | She made me leave. |
| a. John Dalton made the atomic theory useful. (2) | |
| b. Modern medicine has made many advances. (1) | |
| c. The hot air made the balloon rise. () | |
| d. Then, he made a bad mistake. () | |
| e. This makes me annoyed. () | |
| f. The children made a lot of noise. () | |
| g. You are making it too complicated. () | |
| h. They made him do it. () | |
| i. Reading always makes me sleepy. () | |

j. I like to make toys. ()
 A teacher can find the words that cause problems for his students by asking them to translate passages into Thai. Some common words that cause misunderstanding because of their different meanings are s (plural, possessive),

be, it, there, have, see.
 This type of exercise can also be used with points of grammar that are important in reading. Most of the sentences in the exercise should be taken from the reading passage.

The passive

The passive is a group of two words. The first word in am, is, are, was or were and the next word is a verb. This verb usually has-ed or-en on the end. Here are some sentences. Some of them are passive, some are not. P= passive. N= not the passive.
 Write P or N after each sentence. The first two are done for you.

1. The work is finished. (P)
2. John is happy. (N)
3. One of his legs was broken. ()
4. We were given some money. ()
5. The boys are cleaning their teeth. ()
6. Everyone pushed. ()
7. It was written quickly. ()
8. He pointed at the picture. ()
9. I am surprised. ()
10. Everything was mixed together. ()

3 Which words? Learners can often read sentences well but they have difficulty when they read a passage. The following exercise helps the learners see how sentences are connected to each other in meaning by words like pronouns. The exercise also helps teach idea of singular and plural. Sentences from the passage which already contain pronouns, and other words that refer to things already mentioned are listed after the passage.

Which words?

All the following groups of words are taken from the passage. Some words have a line under them. Find other words in the passage to take their place. The first one is answered for you.

1. He had met his wife..... (the farmer)
2. they loved each other
3. so that it would go faster.
4. he got in the cart

This kind of exercise is very easy to make. It can very quickly be written on

the blackboard. The learners can mark their own work using an answer key.
 4 Cloze The cloze exercise can be used as a test or as a learning exercise. Here is an example of a part of a cloze test.

The easiest way is _____ always the best way.
 _____ because something is difficult _____
 do, we value it _____ more....

Every fifth word has been taken out of a reading passage that the learners have never seen before. The learners must fill in the missing words by guessing. They look at the words before and after the empty space to help them guess the words. This is a very good test of reading ability. It tests how close the reader's thought is to the writer's thought. Usually in a test like this there are 40-50 empty spaces. The words must be taken out according to a plan. Every fifth word can be left out, or every sixth or seventh etc., but it must be done in a regular way. A line is drawn to show each missing word. There are two ways of marking. One way is to accept any good answer. Another way is to accept only the words that are exactly the same as the ones left out. This last way is the easiest for the teacher and gives the same result. That is, the marks of the learners will be different when you mark in the two different ways, but the learners will be in the same job as a multiple-choice test and is much easier to make. According to Anderson (1971) the relation between the results of a cloze test and results of a multiple-choice test on the same passage is as follows.

Cloze	Multiple-choice	Difficulty of passage
above 53%	90%	good for reading alone
44%-53%	75%	good for learning
less than 44%	less than 75%	too difficult

When marking the test, mis-spellings do not lose marks, but the words must be grammatically correct. That is the words should be the correct tense, and should show if they are singular or plural.

When the teacher uses the cloze test as a way of teaching, he should accept any words that can fill spaces. The learners should read through all the cloze passage quickly and then reread it while filling in the empty spaces. It is best if the learners fill all the easiest words first and then go back to try the more difficult ones again. The learners should try to give reasons for their choices when the work is being discussed. After discussion of the answers, the learners can look at the original passage to see if their answers change the meaning of the passage in any way. The number of letters in each word can be shown by a short line for each letter. The first letter of each word may also be given. Learners may also fill the empty spaces in the English

This way of using the cloze passage with words from their mother-tongue. This exercise gives learners practice in guessing the meaning of a word from the context.

A cloze exercise can be made with the words written in code. In an ordinary cloze test, few learners get more than 50% correct. When the words are not left out, but are written in code, the chance of getting a 100% score is much higher. Here is an example.

The easiest way is always the best way. do we value it more... because something is difficult to guess they help the learners The first words in code are quite easy to guess they give close attention to the Code makes the learners to read well, he

to guess the other words. These puzzles are very easy to make. Many of the students tried. I asked one student did this very slowly famous book to the class. When finished and with a very tired voice. the piece he just asked him about the meaning. "I am read. His answer) &T@ the class laugh. "I am sorry, Sir," he said. "

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Reading material

If a teacher thinks it is important for his learners to read well, he needs to be sure that there is plenty of reading material for the learners to use. Reading can be done inside the classroom and at home.

A teacher can provide plenty of reading material in the classroom by using a reading box. A reading box is made of a large number of different reading passages with questions and exercises is on a separate piece of paper. Each passage with its questions and exercises are all at the same vocabulary level. In the simplest type of reading box the passages are all at the same vocabulary and structure level. The questions and structure level. The questions and exercises with each passage are usually multiple-choice, true/false, or some other type that is easily marked. The passages and questions are printed on thick cards, or on pieces of paper which are put in plastic bags. So, if there

are fifty different passages in the box then there are fifty different cards or bags.

At the beginning of the reading lesson, each learner takes a passage and reads it. Each learner reads a different passage. When he finishes reading, he answers the questions, does the exercises and then gets the answer sheet to mark his own work. He puts his result on a graph. He then puts the passage in the box and takes another one. So, each learner can read at his own speed. The learner can read the passages at one level in any order, because they are all of the same level of difficulty. He works by himself, marks his work himself, and puts his results on his graph himself. The teacher's job is very easy. He checks the learners' graph to see their progress, but HE DOES NOT MARK THEIR WORK or WRITE RESULTS IN HIS OWN BOOK. If he does this, learners will cheat. There are many advantages of the reading box.

1. The teacher does not do much work. He is free to mark work from other lessons or to give help to individual learners.
2. The learners work by themselves and learn to be independent.
3. The material is very cheap. Each learner does not have to have a book of reading passages. Each year the teacher can add more material to the reading box and make the old material better. A teacher or a group of teachers can make the material. Only one or two copies of each exercise are needed. If they are put in thin plastic bags they will last for many years. A box with 100 different exercises could keep a large class busy for a very long time. The learners do not need to buy books which are often very expensive.
4. Learners work at their own speed. In an ordinary reading box there are several levels so that learners can work according to their knowledge and ability. The better learners can use more difficult material than the others.
5. The graphs make the learners interested in their progress.

To make his own reading box the teacher buys some books of reading passages that have a complete reading passage (with exercises) on one page. (See for example Elementary Stories for Reproduction and Elementary Comprehension Pieces by L.A.Hill, Longmans; Speed Reading by E. Quinn and L.S.P.Nation, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur). The teacher then cuts up the book and puts each page in a plastic bag and seals the bag. Because

the passages are all at the same level; each learner can read a different passage; do the exercises, mark them and then take a new passage. In this way just two or three books costing about twenty baht each can give enough reading material for several classes for several hours. A good project for a teachers' summer course would be to make exercises to go with the passages. These exercises can be sealed in the plastic bags with the passages from the books. Exercises like questions to be answered in the mother-tongue, which meaning?, and which words? can be used.

Reading puzzles can also be put into plastic bags. Here are some examples of reading puzzles.

This is a puzzle based on describing the positions of people, places or things. It makes the learners read the material carefully many times. It is not difficult to make others like this.

There are five children in a race. They are John, Jack, Joseph, James and Jim.
Joseph is in the middle.

John is the last.
James is between John and Joseph.
Jim is between Joseph and Jack.

Questions

1. Who came first in the race?
2. Who came second in the race?
3. Who came third in the race?
4. Who came fourth in the race?
5. Who came last in the race?

Here is another puzzle.

Jim and Mary are going to the dance.
Jack and Lucy are going to the pictures.
Jack and Mary wear their new shoes.
Jim and Lucy wear their old shoes.

Questions

1. Here is a boy. He is going to the dance in his old shoes.

Who is he?

2. Who is going to wear old shoes to the pictures? etc.
3. Who is going to wear new shoes to the dance?

The What is it? exercise can be used with a passage (the answer is a word in the passage) or it can be a reading exercise on its own. Something is described. The learners must try to guess what it is. The first sentences do not give very much information so that the learners must read more. Here is an example.

It is big. It costs a lot of money. Some people own one, some people own more than one. We can see many of them in a city. It has four wheels. It can travel very fast.

Usually four or five people can ride in it. It is usually kept in a garage at night.
what is it?

Puzzles like these are very useful exercises for making learner think carefully about what they read.

Simplified reading books, also known as graded readers, are very important in a reading course. Simplified readers are story books which are written in simple words. They are available at different levels of difficulty. The Longmans Structural Readers have six levels. Level one uses only 300 different words. So if a learner knows most of these 300 words, he can easily read any book at this level. Here are some of the titles at that level.

- The Battle of Newton Road
- The Flying Spy
- The House near the Sea
- The Station after the Last Station
- Kate and the Clock

Level two uses a vocabulary of 500 words, level three 750 words, level four 1,100 words, level five 1,500 words, and level six 1,800 words. Other series of simplified readers are the Oxford University Press Delta, readers, the Ladder series (with 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000 and 5,000 word levels) and the New Method Supplementary Readers (with 480, 750, 1,000, 1,400, 1,800, 2,300 and 2,500 word levels).

It is best to buy a few copies of many different titles, so that when a student reading a book he can change it for one that another student has just read. Reading simplified books is sometimes called extensive reading because the learners do not need to read carefully and thoroughly, but just read to enjoy the story. In extensive reading, the students should read a lot of easy material. While reading they should not have to look up many words in the dictionary. For this reason, the students should read books that contain vocabu-

lary that they already know. Extensive reading should be reading for pleasure. It should be a reward for learning. The teacher can tell the learners, because you know these words you can now easily read these books.

Extensive reading can be checked in various ways. The most important things about these ways are that they do not take too much of the learners' time away from reading, and that they do not ask for a detailed knowledge of the contents of the books.

1. The teacher write a very short summary of the book.
2. The teacher prepares a multiple-choice test of the main ideas in each book. When a learner finishes a book he does the test, marks it himself, and puts his results on a graph
3. The teacher asks each learner individually about the story
4. The learners fill in a form about the book.

Here is an example.

Title			
Writer			
Level of the book			
Time taken to read the book			
The reader's opinion about the book			
The difficulty of the book			

A final word

Students are likely to succeed in reading if they have plenty of interesting material that is not too difficult for them. This article has described ways in which teachers can prepare their own material without spending too much money. This work is easier if teachers work together and share material. A good reading exercise can be used by many teachers for many years.

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