

READING? WHAT A BORE! Let's make it fun,

Tonie de Silva
Inst. Anglo Mexicano, Centro

Why is it so important to give some sort of introduction to any activity carried out within the classroom, especially in Juniors' classes? Well, we all know the answer: because it will put students in the picture; because students will find it easier to do the exercises; because the students are being trained to use certain micro-skills; etc... But most important of all because we want to motivate our students, we want to give them a purpose to perform whatever task they are given and to find the activity enjoyable. This is especially relevant when we do reading exercises with our juniors. Reading in itself is boring and very often difficult for them. Therefore our lead-ins are, in fact, the turning point in making our reading activities successful!

And how can we vary the way we introduce our reading activities?

We know we can use pre-questions, we can get students to speculate on the title, to find a word, to confirm knowledge, etc... but let me give you a couple of ideas which will add variety to your list of lead-ins.

a) Level: J5 to J11

Time: 5 mins.

Teachers must be familiar with the text and summarise the content in one long sentence. Teacher writes the sentence on the blackboard, divides the group into two teams and gives the students a couple of minutes to read the sentence and be familiar with it. Each team takes turns. The task is to delete the unnecessary words in the sentence. Each team will have a chance to delete up to two words each turn. The teacher has to write down the number of words each team deletes. The winning team will be the one which deletes more words. The final

sentence must be grammatically correct and nothing can be changed from the original sentence. After this you can get the students to read the passage and answer further comprehension exercises.

b) Level: J5 to J11

Time: 7 mins.

Again the teacher must read the passage before and extract the topic sentence but this time the teacher writes a very short simple sentence on the blackboard. Again you can form groups or teams and instead of deleting words each team takes turns and adds one or two words to the sentence. Nothing can be changed from the original sentence and the final sentence has to be grammatically correct. The team which produces more words is the winner.

This is how these two ideas work:

Reading passage:

a)

HELICOPTER

A helicopter is a machine that can fly forwards, upwards downwards, and sideways. This is because it has a rotor, or rotating (turning) wing. Ordinary aircraft have fixed wings and their engines can drive them forwards only. The helicopter's rotor consists of metal blades mounted on top of the body. Turned by the engine, the rotor screws itself into the air to lift the helicopter off the ground. When flying forwards, the rotor blades are angled so that they push the air backwards, rather as you push the water backwards when you are swimming. On its own, the spinning rotor would make the whole helicopter spin. But this is prevented by the movement of a small upright rotor situated on the tail.

Teacher writes on blackboard a long sentence on the content of the passage:

e.g. *A helicopter is a small, modern machine that generally flies upwards, downwards and sideways due to a rotating wing.*

By deleting unnecessary words from the sentence, the final sentence could be something like this:

e.g. *A helicopter is a machine that flies. Or a helicopter flies.*

b) If we use the same reading passage on helicopters, the sentence written on the blackboard should be something like this:

e.g. *All helicopters are modern, beautiful and very necessary machines that can fly forwards, upwards, downwards and sideways because of a rotating wing.*

TRY THEM OUT, THEY COULD BE FUN!