# Reading Activity & Lesson Plan

#### Overview:

#### Learner Audience & Level:

Adult ESL international classroom in the US

Intermediate to Advanced learners. As a possible adaptation for beginner ESL students, see the BBC website below has news articles that contain audio clips of the articles and vocabulary reinforcement.

Intermediate to advanced learners

## Activity Type:

Individual reading exploration and reinforcement from discussions in online communities and forums.

# **Activity Goals:**

The goals of this activity are to help students go beyond thinking of reading as a teacheroriented task and to become engaged in what they read by participating in online discussion boards, comment postings, or chat rooms that discuss what the student (and the community) has read.

# **Activity: "Reading Reviews"**

#### **PRE-Activities**

Pre-activities in this module take place at the beginning of a semester, to help students know what to prepare for and to understand what knowledge base will be expected of them for the weekly or every other week news reading assignments.

#### 1. Short lesson on Genres:

Students brainstorm different genre types, stimulated either by visiting websites about genre, visiting the library, or a class lesson that incorporates visiting Amazon.com and noting the particular vocabulary used for different writing genres.

Students make posters for the classroom (or an Evernote page) highlighting vocabulary for different genres, incorporating pictures

The following websites have lists of possible writing genres:

- http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/reading\_for\_kids/42111
- http://www.sarasota.k12.fl.us/bhs/bryan/bryan home2.html
- <a href="http://www.thewritingsite.org/resources/genre/default.asp">http://www.thewritingsite.org/resources/genre/default.asp</a>

#### 2. Overview of "commentaries" (Idea from Kelm's Technology Module):

For homework, students must find a website, either in English or in their L1, that allows readers to post comments to online articles.

Link to BBC articles in multiple languages:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/languages/

Students locate one article with many commentaries, and summarize (written or orally in class) what kind of comments people made to the article. For example, a comment could be:

- Reflective
- Collegiate/academic

- Insightful internal thoughts
- Personal
- Attacking, etc.

As a class, students discuss what types of comments people make to different genres of writing.

- 3. Students also bring in print-outs of the article and the comments made to the article that they read. With partners or in groups, students make a second set of classroom posters (or an Evernote page) representing different types of comments.
- 4. Students find an online article or story in their own language, read it, and complete the Reading Notes worksheet (in English), then present what they read about in an informal class discussion.
- 5. In consultation with the teacher, students do research and choose their own favorite English language website where they can leave comments to what they read. Here is a list of example websites:
  - <a href="http://www.npr.org/">http://www.npr.org/</a> also contains audio clips of articles
  - <a href="http://slate.com/">http://slate.com/</a> allows readers to comment and join a discussion board for each article
  - <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/index.shtml">http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/index.shtml</a> for beginning learners, the BBC has an incredible site for English Learners that incorporates news, community, blogs, etc. Not every article can be commented on, but the blogs can be.
  - <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html">http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html</a> the New York Times has great opinion articles that allow people to comment

#### **DURING- and POST-Activities**

- 6. Weekly or every two weeks, students read articles of their choice from their news website.
- 7. For each article, students complete the Reading Notes worksheet and use it to formulate their comments (Reading Notes can be handed in if the teacher wants to keep track of student progress)
- 8. Students write a draft of their relevant comments to the online article or story they read. Students may also be required to additionally write a comment on someone else's comment. Before posting their comments online, students do in-class peer-editing of one another's writing for accuracy. Alternatively, students can email their writing to the teacher for accuracy and content feedback.
- 9. Once students post their comments, they can email the teacher the link to their article and post for assessment.

#### Other Notes:

As described in Sarah's reflective statement on reading, this lesson can be tweaked to apply to books as well, using Amazon.com and other book-oriented sites as a place where students can post reviews.

Most elements of this lesson plan and of the "Reading Notes" worksheet, posted under the materials section, was derived from Dr. Swaffer's reading module lecture. It specifically highlights aspects of reading that she highlighted in her lecture, particularly that good readers should:

Be interested in what they are reading (which is why the lesson has them research and choose their own favorite website)

Take notes

Understand the who, what, when, where, why, and how of what they've read

Re-read

Be aware of genres and types of writing

Relate students' reading skills in their L1 to their reading performance in their L2, i.e. let them tap into their prior knowledge and reading skills to apply to the target language.

#### **Activity Materials**

Reading Notes Handout (attached)

#### **Reflective Statement on Reading**

In our experience, we've found that requiring students to comment on one another's work is difficult – students do not want to openly (as opposed to anonymously) critique their peers. A class blog that Sarah created is an example of how not to integrate class commentaries. See the website at:

## http://tiep110rwv.blogspot.com/

Be sure to look at the individual student blogs. She asked the students (low beginner ESL) to post all of their writings to the blog. Also, and pertinent to this reading module, she had students form "book clubs" of 3-4 people (instructions are here: <a href="Attach:OnlineBookClubInstructions.pdf">Attach:OnlineBookClubInstructions.pdf</a>), and after they read parts of their book, they were to summarize their thoughts on the blog, then comment on other people's posts. This worked out horribly, as many of the students had a difficult time having a "conversation" about their book with one another online. Perhaps this was because the students felt, or knew, that no one but the teacher would read their comments and discussion.

During Dr. Swaffar's lecture on reading, her activities were a reminder that there is already infrastructure for this type of online discussion: www.amazon.com allows book readers to post reviews, news websites have online comments where article readers can post their views directly to the article they've read, and You Tube provides a place where viewers can leave comments, and even personal blogs and discussion boards all allow commentaries. Many of these sites require that commenters register with the website to establish minimal content regulation, but if the teacher can provide instructions and aid students in finding and registering to their favorite reading-based website, students can become an active participant in that site's discussion boards or book reviews. This allows students to have an active role in a native (and sometimes non-native) target-language community, and helps them foster a love of reading and participating with others in discussion about what they've read. On top of all this, the student's participation is anonymous, so issues with anxiety are lessened, and the student feels more free to be honest in their writing and are more inclined to provide meaningful responses without teacher input. These were the motives and goals behind the Reading Module activities.

# Reading Notes

# **Before Reading**

Article Title:	
Article Origin (Author or Website):	
Before reading, what can you predict about the article from the title?	
Read the article Take notes of the relevant information to the story or article: Who?:	
What?:	
When?:	
Where?:	
Why?:	
How?:	
After Reading What type or genre of writing is this?	
How is this article or story unique? How is the writing style or phrasing unique?	
What new vocabulary did you encounter that was specific to this article's topic?	
What part or parts of the article or story did you find most interesting?	
Jot down a few of the major ideas or significant details of the article, and comment on that detail.  Significant Detail:  Comment:	
Now, re-read the article or story, and note anything that you did not notice when you read it the first t	time