

Language skills related tasks essay sample

[Education](#), [Teaching](#)



The authentic reading text I have chosen for Elementary students is a recipe page from a popular magazine and is approximately 150 words long, excluding ingredients. The reason I have chosen this text is because it is current, relevant to daily life, informative, visually appealing, and also based on a topic that people are naturally interested in - food. The universally familiar format this article takes; list, photographic image of a meal, and numbered paragraphs, builds an automatic understanding of context (however basic) and activates schemata amongst readers of various languages. In group situations this potentially elicits a more naturally induced discourse. As J. Harmer says, quoting Cook 1989: 60, in his book *The Practice of English Language Teaching*; 'In order to make sense of the text we need to have pre-existent knowledge of the world.'

It's suitability for a receptive skills lesson lies in the fact that the information is broken into four small sections: The article title followed by a short introduction, the afore mentioned list of ingredients - which in itself holds the majority of the lexis to be found within the following lines of the cooking directions. Lastly, there is a 'quick tip' section of prose promoting a branded food item. Each section provides ideal opportunity for separate tasks so that the student doesn't have to look at the text on the page as a whole, which could otherwise over-face elementary students, especially given the unfamiliar lexis to be found in it. As Harmer says, in the afore referenced book; 'It is clear that both sentence length and the percentage of unknown words both play their part in a text's comprehensibility.' Lead-in

To engage the students and allow them the time to process the context, I would make use of realia; oven gloves, chopping board, the recipe and a sign

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on the edge of the desk saying 'Kitchen'. To accompany the visual and spatial effect, concept check questions will follow to ensure an appropriate understanding, such as; 'Where am I?' 'What am I doing?' Then with reference to the recipe; 'What's this?' 'Why do I need it?' This should elicit some form of the words 'cooking', 'making food', 'baking', etc. Also, should take no longer than three minutes. Once the students all know that they're dealing with recipes I can show them the pull-out and move onto pre-teaching some of the lexis that has potential to hinder them from comprehending the text later on.

First of all the names of foods included in the instructions need to be taught, so I would ask the students what they can see in the photograph by eliciting ideas as to the more indistinguishable shapes such as; chopped apple, herbs and nuts; alongside the more obvious; chips, pork chops, and gravy, i. e. I would quickly draw animations on the board to provide visual aid i. e. apple, pig snout, a labelled jar of herbs, etc. I would do the same to point out measurement abbreviations; 1 tbsp, 30g, using universal symbols such as; a spoon, weighing scales, etc. Once the students have gathered an understanding of the key lexis I can move onto the next task. Initial reading task

I have created a short and simple 'reading for gist' task which instructs the students to read the article and put the events in order, the students are also provided with a selection of sentences to be found within the body of the text [provided on separate sheet - Task 1]. The sub- skills involved in this task include: skim reading; which improves the ability to identify topic and

summarise information. It also enables location of key information before they go on to read the text in detail, and helps with generalised recognition of the layout, paragraph order and, in this case, abbreviations.

The rationale behind this particular exercise is to get the student familiar with the lexis and give them an overview of the meaning, even if they don't entirely understand it all, they can gather nuggets of information that, collectively, make a bigger picture. This is done not only via the words in the text but by the individual's schemata and the previous knowledge about cooking that they have brought with them to the lesson. As Harmer says; 'This is greatly helped if the reader or listener's schemata allow them to have appropriate expectations of what they are going to come across'. The second reading task

For this task I would simply ask the students to read, firstly, the introduction section of the article and to answer 'true or false' questions about the content of the text. Secondly, to go to the instructional section of the recipe and answer another set of true or false questions [provided-Task 2]. The sub-skills practised here are: detailed reading; acknowledgement of instructions, the ability to draw conclusions, accuracy and inference skills. The rationale for this task is the idea that the students will not only look for the pattern and shapes of the words but they will use inference skills to deduct the specific meaning of each sentence in question, they have to do or they can't tell me whether the answer is true or false. The reason for splitting the exercise into two parts, with regards to the paragraph structure, is simply to avoid over-facing elementary level students.

Productive skills follow-up task

I have decided on a short creative writing task.

' Students will study the sample of the text or the example given and they will be able to model texts similar to what they want to write'. J. Scrivener, 2005.

Using the magazine recipe/article as a model, the students are to write their own article in magazine or newspaper format (titles, text boxes, quick tips, conversational style, etc.) about a particular dish, confectionary product, or homemade snack they enjoy. I would encourage them to research the ingredients online and base their article around those.

The sub-skills involved in writing in this case are; creative writing (expression), possibly informal/formal writing skills and attention to detail.

The rationale behind this task is to grant the student an opportunity to relate the language to their own life and to feel more empowered. As a by-product it also encourages them to improve sentence structure, form and spelling.

References

The practice of English Language Teaching, Third Edition, Jeremy Harmer, Longman, 2001
Jim Scrivener, Learning Teaching, Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2005.

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