Motivating students to read

Miyoko T. Maass
Seigakuin University

Research shows many positive effects of extensive reading, namely improvement in students' vocabulary, reading speed, reading comprehension and in their attitude toward reading. As a result students' motivation for reading increases, triggering students to read more and improving their reading ability further. When implementing extensive reading into a reading program, it is very helpful to motivate students to read with interesting classroom activities for extensive reading. This activity helps consolidate students' reading experiences with writing, speaking and listening practices. For this activity the students choose their favorite reader, make a poster and write a speech to introduce the reader in class. One third of the class give poster presentations while the other students listen and evaluate the presentations. It is also interactive in that there is a question and answer session.

　これまでの研究で多読の有効性が論じられている。特に学習者の語彙、読む早さ、読解力を伸ばし読書に対する意識を高める点において効果があるとみなされている。その結果学習者は読書に対する高い動機づけが持て、さらに読書の量も増え、読解力も養える。多読をリーディングの授業に導入する場合、多読を使った楽しいタスクで学習者の読もうとする意欲を高めることができる。ここで紹介するアクティビティは、学習者の読書とライティング、スピーキング、そしてリスニングの練習を統合したものだ。ここでは、学習者は各自好きなリーダーを選びそのポスターを作る。そしてそのストーリーをクラスで紹介するためのスピーチを書く。クラスの3分の1が同時にポスタープレゼンテーションをし、その他の学生はその発表を聞き評価する。このアクティビティには質疑応答の時間もあり、発表者と聞き手のインターアクションもある。

Recently, many teachers are concerned with motivating students to read in their reading programs. Even though it is widely believed that reading a large amount of English helps improve students' English proficiency, it is sometimes hard to convince our students of the benefits of reading. This is especially true if students have limited English reading proficiency. In order to help motivate students to acquire good habits, extensive reading with various graded readers has become very popular among English teachers. (For the benefits of extensive reading, see Day & Bamford, 1998; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Mason & Krashen, 1997; and Robb & Susser, 1989). Moreover, interesting activities for extensive reading can help boost interest in reading among students. (See Bamford & Day, 2004 for extensive reading activities.)

At Seigakuin University extensive reading is an integral part of the reading program in the First-year Reading Course. Students have access to more than 1000 graded readers in our extensive reading library and they are encouraged to read and submit book reports weekly. Extensive reading counts towards 40 % of their course grade, and students are evaluated on the total number of pages they read and review in book reports, as well as on a poster presentation of a graded reader. Below I would like to describe a poster presentation, which was effective in promoting positive attitude toward reading among students in my reading class.

In a poster presentation students share their reading experiences with the rest of the class using colorful posters they make to introduce their favorite readers. Not only do students prepare a speech and a poster, they present them and answer questions from the listeners. The task is interactive in nature and calls for all four skills. It is optional to videotape students' presentations for class viewing later. This activity can be used successfully with classes of from 20 to 50 students. It takes about 20 minutes in one class for model presentation and explanation of evaluation criteria, and 45 minutes in a later class for student presentation and evaluation.

Preparation

Step 1: Using two A3 papers, prepare a poster to introduce a well-known story to the class. You can copy a few pictures from the reader, and cut them out, and paste them on the paper. The contents of the poster may consist of various scenes in the story, pictures of famous places in the country where the story takes place, characters in the story, or something like a list of important achievements by a famous musician or athlete. Be sure to make the poster colorful by adding colors and highlighting the pictures. If you are a good artist, you can also draw or paste various things to make the poster attractive. A few sentences may be added to explain relationships among characters or to describe important features of the story.

Step 2: Model a poster presentation to the class. Put the poster on the blackboard using magnets and introduce the story. The presentation may include some information about the author, story, characters and your impressions of the story. Demonstrate a good speech delivery such as eye contact with the listeners, the use of the poster and good voice projection.

Step 3: Prepare a handout explaining the procedure for this poster presentation.

a. Choose your favorite reader.

b. Make a poster about the reader.

c. Write a speech to introduce the story.

d. Practice giving a poster presentation.

Step 4: The teacher can lead a discussion on the method of evaluating posters and presentations. I used a scale of 1 to 10 for evaluation, with 10 being the best. It is helpful when explicit evaluation guidelines are presented along with some demonstration for each score (see Appendix 2 for the evaluation guidelines).

Procedure

Poster presentations are usually given in a large room where a number of presenters give presentations to their listeners as they come and view their posters during a two-hour session.

This poster presentation took a slightly different approach due to a limited classroom space and time. Instead, three 10-minute sessions of presentations were given. Each student was assigned to a session for his or her presentation, and two or three listeners were assigned to evaluate each presenter.

Step 1: Divide the class into 3 groups.

Step 2: Assign each of the students in the first group a spot in the classroom to display their posters; for example, the blackboard, the sidewalls, or the back wall.

Step 3: Two or three students from the other groups should be assigned to each presenter as listeners. This guarantees that all presenters will have two or three listeners who will evaluate them.

Step 4: Let the first group of students make their presentations simultaneously. The listeners are encouraged to ask one or two questions, and then write down the questions and the answers given.

Step 5: While the presenters are talking, the teacher goes around the room to videotape the presentations. Each poster session is between 8 and 10 minutes long, so during this time make sure to film all the presenters, which means that you have only about 40- 60 seconds per presenter.

Step 6: When the first round of presentations is finished, the listeners go back to their desks and evaluate the presenters on the poster, the content of the presentation, the voice clarity and eye contact (see Appendix 1 for the evaluation form). The presenters evaluate themselves.

Step 7: Repeat the activity with the second group of students, followed by the last group of students. Videotape the second group and then the third group.

Step 8: Collect the student evaluation sheets.

Step 9: This is an optional task in a different session. Watch the video taped presentations for further reflection. This is an excellent opportunity for students to reexamine their eye contact, the use of the poster and voice clarity on the screen. Students tend to pay more attention to these criteria when they know that they are being filmed. In this way the videotaping plays an important role in this classroom activity.

Evaluation

The students are evaluated based on the average of peer evaluations and self-evaluation on the poster, the content, voice clarity, and eye contact, plus the teacher evaluation on the poster and the written speech. The maximum score is 60, 40 from the average of peer evaluations and self-evaluation and 20 from the teacher evaluation (see Appendix 4 for the teacher evaluation criteria).

Conclusion

This activity incorporates writing, speaking and listening as well as reading, and it is an excellent way to consolidate the reading experience with speaking practice. For best results, it is recommended to use this activity as a final class project. The teacher demonstration in the beginning is quite helpful for students to grasp the idea of poster presentations. However, preparing a speech can be difficult depending on the English proficiency level of the students. Students need some practice with writing simple summaries of stories and explaining character relationships. In case of weak students

a guided speech sample may be helpful with the initial stage of speech writing (see Appendix 3 for the speech sample). Once the speech is written and the poster is made, it is good to let the students practice giving their presentations in pairs for a few minutes. Repeat this, changing partners. Students should not look at their speeches as it often prevents them from making eye contact with their listeners. The class viewing of the presentations is a very enjoyable part of the classroom activity and it is highly recommended. Even though my students seemed shy watching themselves on the monitor, they were full of smiles. Students are often great artists and those who may not be very good speakers can always compensate by producing great posters. Students do enjoy sharing their reading experiences and looking at each others' posters. Also because several students gave their presentations concurrently, the process was less stressful for the presenters.

Miyoko Maass has been with Seigakuin University since 2000. Her interests include reading, SLA, and student autonomy. <cpsmw947@ybb.ne.jp>

References

Bamford, J., & Day, R. R. (2004). *Extensive Reading Activities for Teaching Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Day, R. R., & Bamford, J. (1998). *Extensive reading in the second language classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hafiz, F. M., & Tudor, I. (1989). Extensive reading and the development of language skills. *ELT Journal, 43*(1), 4-13.

Mason, B., & Krashen, S. (1997). Extensive reading in English as a foreign language. *System, 25* (1) 91-102.

Robb, T.N., & Susser, B. (1989). Extensive reading vs. skills building in an EFL context. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 5*(2), 239-251.

Appendix 1. Evaluation sheet

	poster	content	voice clarity	eye contact
Presenter 1				
Question				
Answer				
Presenter 2				
Question				
Answer				
Self-evaluation				

Appendix 2. Evaluation Guidelines

These questions can serve as guidelines for evaluating the poster, the content, the voice clarity and the eye contact. 10 is the maximum score on the scale of 1 to 10.

The poster (1~10)

Is it informative? Is it attractive?

The content (1~10)

Is it informative? Is it written well?

The voice clarity (1~10)

Was it clear? Was it delivered well?

The eye contact (1~10)

Did the presenter look at the listeners? Did the presenter utilize the poster well?

Appendix 3. A Speech Sample

Hello. Thank you for coming to my presentation.

I'm going to talk about _____.

This is a story about ~ who ~

The main characters of this story are ~, ~, ~ and ~.

Give a simple summary (This story takes place in~. At first ~. Then ~. In the end ~.)

These are the highlights of the story. In this picture ~

I really liked this story because~. I was really moved by this story, especially when~.

It is a great book and I highly recommend it.

Appendix 4. Teacher Evaluation Criteria

The written speech (1~10)

Does the speech contain a good summary or description? Is it complete? Is the speech well written with few grammatical mistakes?

The poster (1~10)

Is it informative? Is it attractive? Does it relate to the written speech?