
Reading on Your Own: An Extensive Reading Course

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READING ON YOUR OWN: AN EXTENSIVE READING COURSE. Mary Ellen Barrett and Maryanne Kearny Datesman. Boston, Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle, 1992. pp. 160. \$14.00.

The idea for this book was developed following a plenary session given by Stephen Krashen at the 1984 TESOL Convention in New York. Krashen noted that successful students read for pleasure. The authors wanted to develop a text that would successfully incorporate this idea into a structured English as a Second Language (ESL) reading course. Ultimately, the authors wanted to teach students to be competent, independent readers.

This text is designed for high-intermediate/advanced reading students who will most likely pursue an academic career in an English speaking environment. The book is divided into three main sections:

Part A: The Extensive Reading Course

Part B: Activities to Help You Improve Your Coursework

Part C: Advanced Activities for Improving Reading, Speaking, and Writing

Part A introduces the text to the students and outlines the requirements for the course. In this section, students are not only taught reading strategies but also how to have effective group discussions, to increase their vocabulary, to summarize, to write reading reports and how to select and locate appropriate readings. Students are to be evaluated through a series of written, oral and group reports. The text stresses that students, especially initially, should not be graded by writing skill but by participation and a demonstration of comprehending what they have read.

One of the strengths of this section is teaching the students how to find and select reading materials. A lesson on learning to use the library is incorporated. This is extremely useful especially for those students who will enroll in university courses. A large part of academic course work is centered around library research. However, this text lists only a few of the many resources offered by most libraries. It would be important for the teacher to be familiar with the resources of local libraries in order to help the students thoroughly utilize the library.

While writing skills are not emphasized, the students are expected to write several reports on what they have read. Although this text briefly discusses paraphrasing, a supplemental lesson on plagiarism should be included for those students planning to

study in the United States in order to learn what is considered acceptable paraphrasing.

Part B contains practice exercises to build upon the concepts taught in Part A. Once the students clearly understand what is expected, they work on fulfilling the requirements through independent reading. This section contains only general guidelines allowing for increased reader input. The exercises may have to be modified to be more task specific for lower level students. Normally, only one practice exercise is given for each skill taught. The teacher would have to closely monitor the students to see if additional skill work is needed.

Part C has three supplemental activities: evaluating text, debating an issue, and synthesizing information. These activities can be implemented into the course if time permits or if attention to specific areas is needed. These activities are excellent for increasing analytical skills. It is hoped that teachers would be encouraged to include these activities into the body of the course. Lesson 1: "Evaluating What You Read" is an invaluable lesson for ESL students or for any student. Learning to distinguish fact versus opinion, the author's intent, and word connotation are vital skills when evaluating or comprehending any text.

This text does well to combine all the modal skills. But the teacher, like the student, must turn to supplementary resources in order to tailor the course to the students needs. There are no supplementary materials to accompany the text. A brief outline on how to implement the text is given in the preface of the book.

Suggestions for record keeping are also included in the text. As in any reading-directed course, the teacher would be responsible for a large amount of record keeping, especially in this course where three reading reports are to be completed each week. A sample method is given for keeping track of the students' progress, but no mention is given of possibly having the students keep their own log to help eliminate the volume of record keeping.

The teacher would need to be prepared for a high level of teacher feedback on the students' reports and discussions. Needs of the students would have to be dealt with individually as well as collectively. This would be time-consuming for the teacher but necessary in order to effectively evaluate the progress of the students.

This book is excellent in encouraging students to read on their own and in teaching them skills on how to be independent readers. But the students as well as the teacher must be prepared for a lot of work if this course is to be effective.

About the Reviewer

Karen is completing her Master's degree in TESOL at BYU in Provo, Utah and is teaching in the English Language Center there.