

Teaching Reading and Writing

Motivating learners to read and write

www.teachingenglish.org.uk



Learning outcomes

This module of teaching reading and writing looks at techniques to keep your students interested and motivated during reading and writing activities. By the end of the module you will be able to:

- explain how specific techniques and approaches are connected to motivation
- identify a number of appropriate activities that will enhance students' motivation to carry out reading and writing tasks
- identify some simple strategies to motivate students' in challenging classroom situations.

1 Before you watch

a. How do you motivate your learners to read and write in English? List some ideas here.

A **meaningful task** is one which has a value for students in the real world.

Realia are real objects and everyday items including menus, timetables and leaflets that can easily be brought into the classroom for a range of purposes.

Fluency refers to how well a learner communicates meaning in both speaking and writing, without concentrating on how many mistakes they make in grammar and vocabulary.

Source: Adapted from the British Council TKT Glossary.

b. How are meaningful tasks, realia and fluency connected to motivation?

Try to compare your answers with a partner.

2 Watch

2.1 Increasing motivation

Watch and listen to the commentary at the beginning of **Motivating learners: Part 1** (00:00 to 01:11).

Then pause the video and answer the following questions.

a. How are realia, fluency and meaningful tasks connected to motivation?

b. Watch again and list the three other ways of increasing motivation that the trainer mentions.

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

2.2 Motivating criteria

Read the following writing task and think about the six criteria mentioned by Marianne in the video and listed below. Then answer the questions.

using realia choosing interesting texts concentrating on fluency
doing group work conducting meaningful tasks giving positive feedback

Writing task

The teacher asks each student to write a question to another student in the class. This can be anything from 'What did you do yesterday?' to 'What do you find most difficult about learning English?' The note is addressed to another student and the teacher delivers it. The students then have to write an answer. Afterwards the teacher displays all the questions and answers on the classroom board.

Adapted from Harmer, J., (2004), How to Teach Writing, Pearson

a. In what way does the task encourage motivation?

b. What could you do to make it even more motivating and interesting?

c. How can you give positive feedback to your learners?

2.3 Motivating techniques

- a. Watch the rest of the video **Motivating learners: Part 1** (01:20 to 09:00) and make a note of the techniques that each of the teachers in the different locations use to motivate their learners.

Teacher Location	Technique
West Bengal, India (01:20 to 02:44)	
New Delhi, India (02:44 to 03:41)	
Istanbul, Turkey (03:41 to 05:22)	
Seoul, South Korea (05:29 to 07:15)	
Taipei, Taiwan (07:15 to 07:53)	
Istanbul, Turkey (07:53 to 09:00)	

- b. Think about which of these techniques would motivate your learners and how?

2.4 Motivating learners to read and write

Watch **Motivating learners: Part 2** (00:00 to 07:17) and answer the questions.

a. How do these activities support reading and understanding a text?

<p>New Delhi, India (00:30 to 05:55)</p>	
<p>Taipei, Taiwan (05:55 to 07:17)</p>	

b. How are these techniques motivating for learners?

<p>New Delhi, India (00:30 to 05:55)</p>	
<p>Taipei, Taiwan (05:55 to 07:17)</p>	

2.5 Example reading and writing activities

Look at the two reading and writing classroom activities below. Both tasks relate to the notion that learners are motivated by activities that focus on fluency rather than accuracy.

a. In what ways do these activities do this?

Consequences	4/3/2 Reading

Consequences

This is a group writing activity for any age. The items in the 'frame' can be adapted for appropriacy and level. You need at least six groups.

Each group starts with a blank sheet of paper. At the top they write the name of famous man. Next they fold the paper at the top to cover the name. Each group then passes their paper to the next group in a clockwise manner. Groups must never unfold the paper to look at what has been written. They now write the word 'met' under the fold followed by the name of a famous woman. Then they fold the paper over what they have written and pass it on to the next group in the same way. This time each group writes the word 'while' and then a sentence, then folds and passes their paper on. This continues for the following items in the frame.

- Name of famous man
- Met Name of famous woman
- While
- He said to her "....."
- She said to him "...."
- The consequence was ...

After writing the last item, groups pass on their papers for the final time. Each group unfolds their paper and reads out the story.

4/3/2 Reading

Divide the class into 2 groups, readers and listeners. Give each reader a text. The texts can be the same but it is more interesting for the listener if there are different texts. Moreover this will allow the teacher to cater for mixed ability.

Put students in pairs of one reader and one listener. Give the reader 4 minutes to read the text aloud to the listener. Then swap pairs. This time the same reader has 3 minutes to read the same text aloud to the new partner. Swap pairs for the final time. Allow the reader only 2 minutes to read the same text to the third partner.

For each turn the reader should try to read the same amount of text even though the time is less. This will increase the reading speed.

b. Think about how could you use these two tasks in your own classes.

2.6 Motivating learners in challenging situations

Watch **Motivating learners: Part 3** (00:00 to 11:00) and answer the questions.

a. What challenge does the teacher face with this activity?

b. What does she do?

-

-

-

-

-

-

-

c. What is the result?

3 Reflection

- a. Choose one of the techniques to motivate learners that you have watched in the videos. Think about when and how you might use it. Write a rough lesson plan to try it out.

- b. Come back to this page in two or three weeks from now and describe how your plan went.

Transcripts and answers

Transcripts of trainer's talk

2.1 Increasing motivation

Reading and writing in a second language is a challenging task for any learner. We need to encourage our students and we need to motivate them to read and write.

There are a number of ways that we can do this; for example, we can choose interesting texts, texts that they would read or write in their own language. We can also give them meaningful tasks, tasks where they can see the value of the activity. We can take in real objects or other stimuli that motivate them to read and write. We can also put them in groups or pairs which they usually prefer than working individually and we can choose activities that concentrate on fluency so they don't have to worry about making mistakes.

Finally we should give them positive feedback so that they are motivated to continue to read and write in English.

Now let's have a look at some examples of these approaches in action. Watch the films and make notes to answer the questions in the viewing task. The answers will appear at the end of the sequence.

2.4 Motivating learners to read and write

Now let's look at how these teachers use energising and motivating activities during important stages of their reading and writing lessons. Watch the films and make notes to answer the questions in the viewing tasks. The answers will appear at the end of each sequence.

2.6 Motivating learners in challenging situations

Let's look now at how a teacher encourages and motivates a class in a challenging situation. Watch the film and make notes to answer the questions in the viewing task. The answers will appear at the end of the sequence.

Answers

2.1 Increasing motivation

- a. Students are motivated by meaningful tasks because they can see the value of them. Using realia gets students engaged. Students generally enjoy tasks that focus on fluency rather than accuracy because they do not have to worry about making mistakes.
- b. Three other ways of increasing motivation that the trainer mentions.
 - i. Using texts that students like, that they would read/write in their own language
 - ii. Working in pairs or groups
 - iii. Giving them positive feedback

2.2 Motivating criteria

- a. The task is reasonably meaningful. The letters when delivered become 'realia' which is motivating. Depending how the teacher responds to the task, it can focus on fluency and just getting the message across. Learners should like the texts as the questions are chosen by themselves. They are not working in pairs or groups but they are interacting with each other. By displaying all the questions and answers on the board the teacher is giving learners positive feedback.
- b. It could be made even more motivating if the questions were in email format. The learners could work in pairs and write to another pair. The teacher could also write different positive comments on each of the answers, and these would also be displayed.
- c. Positive feedback can be given:
 - Through oral praise after a writing activity
 - Through positive correction only
 - By responding with questions that shows interest in what learners have written
 - By asking peers to give positive comments
 - By putting on the board all the good points from a variety of learners' work and going through them
 - By reading out learners' work
 - By displaying learners' work

2.3 Motivating techniques

Teacher Location	Technique
West Bengal, India	Relate the language and the task to real life to make it more meaningful.
New Delhi, India	Use authentic texts in the classroom. For example, advertisements.
Istanbul, Turkey	Allow students to concentrate on fluency rather than accuracy by letting them speak freely without correction.
Seoul, South Korea	Use visuals to stimulate interest in the reading text.
Taipei, Taiwan	Use texts related to students' interest and experience.
Istanbul, Turkey	Allow students to work in pairs and groups.

2.4 Motivating learners to read and write

a. Techniques that support reading:

- **India:** The noughts and crosses game supports and extends reading comprehension.
- **Taiwan:** The quiz also supports and extends students' understanding of the reading text. Learners create their own questions in teams to test each other.

b. Motivating aspects:

- **India:** Students gain points by answering questions correctly about a story they have just read. The competitive element in the game motivates the learners and encourages them to remember key details.
- **Taiwan:** The competitive element of the quiz motivates the learners and energises the class in the last stage of the lesson. The fact that they have written the questions themselves also motivates them.

2.5 Example reading and writing activities

Consequences	4/3/2 Reading
This activity provides learners with a 'frame' but it does not confine learners to using specific vocabulary or grammar. Moreover there is no correction phase. The purpose of the activity is purely to ask learners to communicate in writing and to enjoy hearing the stories read out.	This activity purely focuses on helping learners to read more quickly, there is no correction and only self or possibly peer assessment.

2.6 Motivating learners in challenging situations

a. Challenge:

The class were reticent at the start of the survey task and were reluctant to speak.

b. Motivating and facilitating techniques:

- Clear instructions with gestures (to aid comprehension) at the start of the task.
- Clear modelling with individuals and class.
- Clear instructions with worksheets.
- The teacher encouraged the class with questions.
- She motivated learners with a reward system.
- There was constant monitoring and encouragement.
- There was lots of praise at the end of the class.

c. Result:

The learners gradually gained confidence to ask each other the survey questions. They successfully complete the survey task.

Session notes developed by Marianne Tudor-Craig.
Video produced by Jane Boylan.

With thanks to the following teachers and their classes:

Mili Bhattacharya (India)

Nandini Sarangal (India)

Serhat Tomas (Turkey)

Eun Mi Han (South Korea)

Yvonne Lee (Taiwan)

Kakul Kapoor (India)

Gladys Fanyin Yeh (Taiwan)

Juli Jang (South Korea)