



**International Journal of English Literature and  
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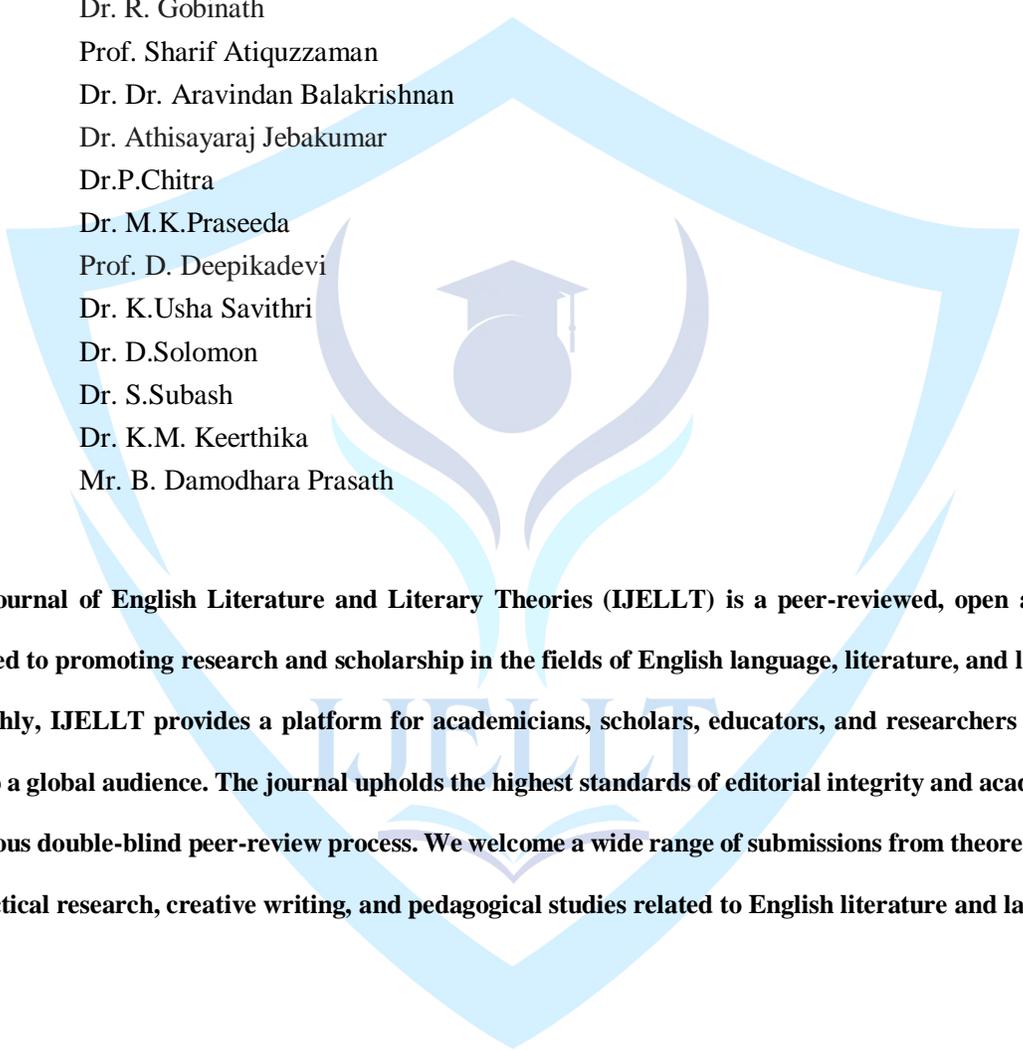
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**Facilitating Spoken Discourse in The Classroom**

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It is no exaggeration to say teaching can be one of the most rewarding careers. Every teacher has the capacity to make the world a better place and give someone the ambition to become somebody. Many passionate graduate teachers encounter a hard-to-crack merciless class and feel they have been drained. To teach so that students actually learn in your class, you need to know the secret procedures and routines that will make you efficient in the classroom.

With literacy rates for young adults now higher than at any other time, it seems incongruous that there should be so much concern that teenagers are not reading as much as they used to. And yet, it's still a major issue in education throughout the developed world. But the concern isn't really about whether teens can read or not, but more about what they are reading and how much.

### **Blockbusters**

It may be a misconception that teenagers aren't reading as much these days. Stephen Krashencites numerous studies that seem to indicate that teenagers are, if anything, reading more than in the past, if we include digital media in the reckoning. He goes on to mention reports going back as far as the 19th century on the appalling state of young adult literacy. If these reports and current concerns are to be believed, things have been getting steadily worse since then. You could reasonably expect that by now we should all be illiterate!

It's clear that a large number of teenagers are reading books. In fact, young adult fiction is a multimillion-pound industry these days. A brief look at the top 100 sellers at a well-known online bookshop reveals quite a healthy presence of books for teenagers. And interestingly enough, the first eBook to reach a million sales was *The Hunger Games*, a book aimed at 12-year-olds and above. And as we know the first author in history to become a billionaire from her writing (no need for names here!) did this with books for children and teenagers. It's also worth noting the post-Potter tendency for longer and longer books for young readers. If we want to answer the question of what gets teens reading, perhaps we should take a look at what's so appealing about the most successful books for teenagers.

### **Approaching adult themes**

Perhaps the two most popular fictional series for young adults in recent years have been The Hunger Games trilogy and The Twilight Saga. They have been translated successfully into all the major languages so it's clear that they have a universal appeal. They may appear to be very different from each other on the surface: the one being set in a futuristic dystopia while the other, although set in the contemporary world is a tale of rival gangs of vampires and werewolves. But they share a number of important themes in common. They are both works of fantasy. They both deal with relationships in the form of a love triangle. Violence and death and all of the emotional and moral conundrums therein are also central plot themes. These themes crop up again and again in young adult fiction. The prevalence of fantasy is easy to understand - successful books need to entertain after all. Vampires, werewolves and wizards may come and go according to fashion. But the human realities of surviving relationships, being different, coping with hardship, violence and even death are here to stay.

Looking at the top ten teen books being sold online at the moment, six fall into the science fiction/fantasy genre, two are set in futuristic dystopias. Four have romance as plot elements, while two deal with the issue of rape. It should come as no surprise that these themes have so much appeal to teenagers who are themselves coming to grips with issues surrounding relationships, sex, violence, and being different themselves, as they near adulthood. Books offer them a safe place to explore these ideas as they try and work out their own beliefs and how they fit in with the world around them.

Most teachers would feel uncomfortable tackling these difficult subjects with students and in some countries, it would be impossible to even think of doing it. Also, apart from the near impossible task of finding books that appeal to all students, the cost of the books themselves and lack of time available, it's extremely difficult to link extensive reading to syllabus demands and exams. There's also the question of what you would actually do with the books.

### **Extensive reading**

When we talk about teenagers not reading, we are really talking about extensive reading, where reading is undertaken voluntarily and purely for pleasure or entertainment where the texts are usually books and the reading happens regularly for extended periods. The benefits of extensive reading are well known. It can lead to faster reading speed and greater ability to process texts. It enhances general language competence as well as knowledge about the world. It also helps to make the reader a better writer by giving them massive amounts of input on usage and vocabulary.

It would be reasonable to assume that these benefits are transferable when it comes to learning foreign languages, but there are a number of features of extensive reading that make it particularly difficult for teachers to use it in the language classroom. Apart from limited availability of suitable texts, extensive reading is also usually a solitary activity which (ideally) takes up long periods of time. The reader chooses what they are going to read and there are no tests or exams involved. In fact any attempts to test or measure what students are reading would be likely to put them off reading as it would look too much like work and lose its appeal.

### **Preparing for Extensive Reading**

A good starting point for a teacher who would like to get their teens reading either at home or in class is Learn English Teens. (a web site). The sections like Short stories & poems, stories and articles, magazines, etc., can engage the readers with enough content. These can also be carried out in the class with the available worksheets in the same web site under each section.

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While it may not be possible or even desirable to work with a novel in class, we can still promote extensive reading in other ways. It's well worth drawing their attention to this. Also, the more knowledge the teacher has about teen literature the better. If you've read the books yourself it's much easier to make recommendations. However, this should be handled carefully though as teenagers may be more likely to listen to each other than the teacher. Being able to read a story in a foreign language can certainly whet the appetite for more.

### **10 commandments for teachers**

- The secret to learning anything is enjoyment
- Be confident
- Make your lessons objective based
- Emphasize key points when you're teaching large classes of students
- Teach students to organise information and content
- Stop and check understanding
- Maximize your teaching time
- Have clear procedure for classroom behaviour
- Google it
- Keep ahead of your game

### **Motivating students to reading**

This article describes ways to generate initial motivation; the second one shows how to maintain this motivation.

- Motivation
- Creating the basic motivational conditions
- Generating initial motivation
- References

### **Motivation**

Motivation is one of the key factors that determine the rate and success of L2 attainment. It provides the main incentive to initiate learning a foreign language and later the determination to persevere and sustain the long and often difficult learning process. Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the best of abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals. Teachers working in state schools are first and foremost supposed to teach the curriculum, but we cannot ignore the fact that this cannot happen without motivating our learners. In addition, adolescent learners come with their own emotional and psychological baggage and interests making the task of motivating them one of the greatest challenges for teachers. Using authentic literature to supplement core materials is one way of motivating adolescents yet the task of reading a short story or novel in a foreign language can be daunting for many pupils.

### **Creating the basic motivational conditions**

- Create a pleasant and supportive learning environment. A context which is supportive will encourage pupils to develop their full potential.
- Establish ground rules or a class contract between yourself and your class regarding behaviour and norms which everyone agrees to. See Greenwood 1997 for an example.
- Encourage peer support groups which recognize individual pupils' interests, levels, skills and strengths. See also final outcomes below - many of these can be produced as group outcomes thereby exploiting different talents and intelligences within each group.

### **Generating initial motivation**

- Inform your pupils of why they are being asked to read an authentic text, and explain the benefits to them. For example, exposure to the richness of real English will develop language awareness, language competence and passive vocabulary assimilation, it will develop global rather than discrete comprehension, it will be different to their regular materials and activities and provide variety, it will develop knowledge of the culture of the target language and, overall, will contribute to pupil's long-term language learning goal. Make sure pupils realise that when reading an authentic text the objectives will be different to those for studying a short text so they can form realistic expectations and avoid frustration and disappointment. Tell them they can do it and will enjoy it!

- Involve pupils in the selection of the text, if possible. For example, if you are using a collection of short stories, give a brief description of each or provide a point of entry (see below) for three or four and organize a class vote for the one pupils like best and, if possible, different groups can work on the story they prefer. Being involved in such decision-making will give pupils a sense of ownership and responsibility. Furthermore, much of successful reading is affected by the way the subject matter relates to the pupil's existing cultural and general knowledge or to subject-specific knowledge. Pupils will be helped in their reading if some of the information is already understood and this will help the learning of new vocabulary.

The choice of appropriate texts is important as those which provide 'too low a level of challenge can result in apathy, but a too high a level can lead to over-anxiety or stress' (Williams 1999). The word challenge suggests something that is not easy but that can be overcome, given outside support and encouragement, in addition to the pupil's own hopeful attitude to the outcome. It also suggests something that is worth overcoming because it leads to personal growth and a sense of achievement.

- Explain how the book is to be worked on. For example, once a week for half an hour in class, fifteen minutes in class and fifteen minutes in the pupils' own time. Make sure the rhythms of reading are built up and class interaction on the reading is developed. How much class time is dedicated to reading will depend on your teaching situation, your curriculum requirements as well as on yourself and your pupils.
- Prepare your pupils. Most pupils will need help in making the leap from teacher-guided close study of graded short texts to authentic literature. Encourage pupils to think about their approaches to reading and how to build their confidence. Allay fears they may have about not understanding every word by emphasizing that 100 per cent comprehension is not necessary to understand the overall meaning. They should use all available clues from the language, the context and from the illustrations, where relevant, to help make sense of the book. We need to bear in mind that 'training of pupils to be hopeful and robust in the face of a challenge, and to develop and use strategies to deal with 'difficulty' is very much the teacher's responsibility' (Rixon 1995). Therefore, train pupils in some of the strategies needed for effective reading such as previewing, skimming and scanning, inferring meaning etc., and explain that support will be provided (see below).

- Provide a point of entry. This could be a scene from a story, an illustration or any paragraph or even page can be looked at or read in class before the actual reading of the whole book begins. The main criterion is for the material to be accessible to the pupils and sufficiently stimulating to arouse interest and motivate and give a flavour of the work in terms of setting, characters, and narration etc. It can provide a starting point (and a future point of reference throughout the reading) for all subsequent reader involvement with the text. The point of entry should be able to be read largely without explanation, and the pupils should be encouraged to react to the stimuli the passage contains. Pupils can predict what the story will be about or express a reaction (positive or negative) to the material. If there is a film tie-in or audio recording of a story containing sound effects, these could also be used as points of entry. Appendix 1 provides an example of a point of entry for *Treasure Island*.

- Provide pre-reading stimuli. This is a before-reading stage involving, for example, previewing the title and the cover illustration, the back cover, information about the author, looking at the list of contents or chapter headings, and looking through the book to get an impression of layout, print size and illustrations. Pre-reading stimuli will also exploit various elements which lead into the story involving stimulating pupils' interest, eliciting vocabulary, introducing characters and setting, making predictions about genre and using prior knowledge to contextualize a story and to relate it to what they already know. For example, for *Treasure Island* ask pupils what they know about pirates and pirates' tales. What do the stories have in common? (Treasure, violence, excitement, mutiny, etc.)

- Inform pupils of a final outcome. Many stories lead naturally to a stimulating outcome such as acting out a story, producing a poster, creating a quiz, a role-play, writing a summary, a letter, a book review, or questionnaire, organizing a project or a display, recording favourite passages complete with sound effects, directing a TV book programme, etc. Knowing that their work is leading towards something concrete and relevant can help pupils invest the necessary effort and persevere throughout the reading process.

### **Rounding off the learning experiences**

- Display final outcomes. It can be very motivating for pupils to see their efforts displayed. Outcomes can be produced individually or by groups of pupils. If appropriate, involve parents.
- Encourage positive self-evaluation. As mentioned above, a reading diary can include an evaluation stage to encourage pupils to reflect on some or all of the following:
  - Was the book enjoyable for you? Why or why not?
  - What were your favourite or least favourite moments?
  - Who were your favourite or least favourite characters?
  - Was the book easy for you to read? Why or why not?
  - Would you recommend it to your friends? Why or why not?
  - What did you learn from the book? For example, useful language, factual, cultural, historical, geographical information, etc.
  - Would you like to read another story by the same author? Why or why not?
  - Give honest evaluation. Let pupils know why they did or did not do well and what they can do to improve. We need to be aware of the dangers of an over-reliance on praise, and of the negative effects of punishments and reprimands.

To conclude, viewing motivation as a process and considering how each of the different stages interrelate can help our pupils develop the habit of reading by becoming more self-aware, positive, competent and autonomous and, consequently, motivated to tackle the next authentic text. Happy reading!

### **Sample Suggested Activity**

Shopping signs and notices

Look at the advertisement and do the exercises to practice and improve your reading skills.

## Preparation

**A** **SALE SALE**  
**SALE SALE**  
**JR Sports**  
Sale on now  
  
30% 40% 50%  
off everything in store.  
Everything must go!  
  
Sale ends July 1<sup>st</sup>  
**SALE SALE**  
**SALE SALE**

**C** **Free DVD player**  
with every new  
television  
  
**Offer – this week only**  
**TELLYS'R'US**

**B** **FOR SALE**  
Nentindo video  
games console and  
5 games. In box.  
Never been used.  
Like new. £80  
jamiel@curtis.com.uk  
Mobile: 01795 4319765

**D** **NEW department store**  
*Jack and Jill's*  
Opens July 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Free parking for customers.  
Opening times: 10am – 10pm

➤ **Check your understanding: Matching**

Advert A – a sport shop

Advert B – a second hand games console

Advert c – an electrical shop

Advert D – a new department store

➤ **Check your understanding: True or false**

The JR Sports sale starts in August- False

The video console comes with five games-True

The video console is in good condition-True

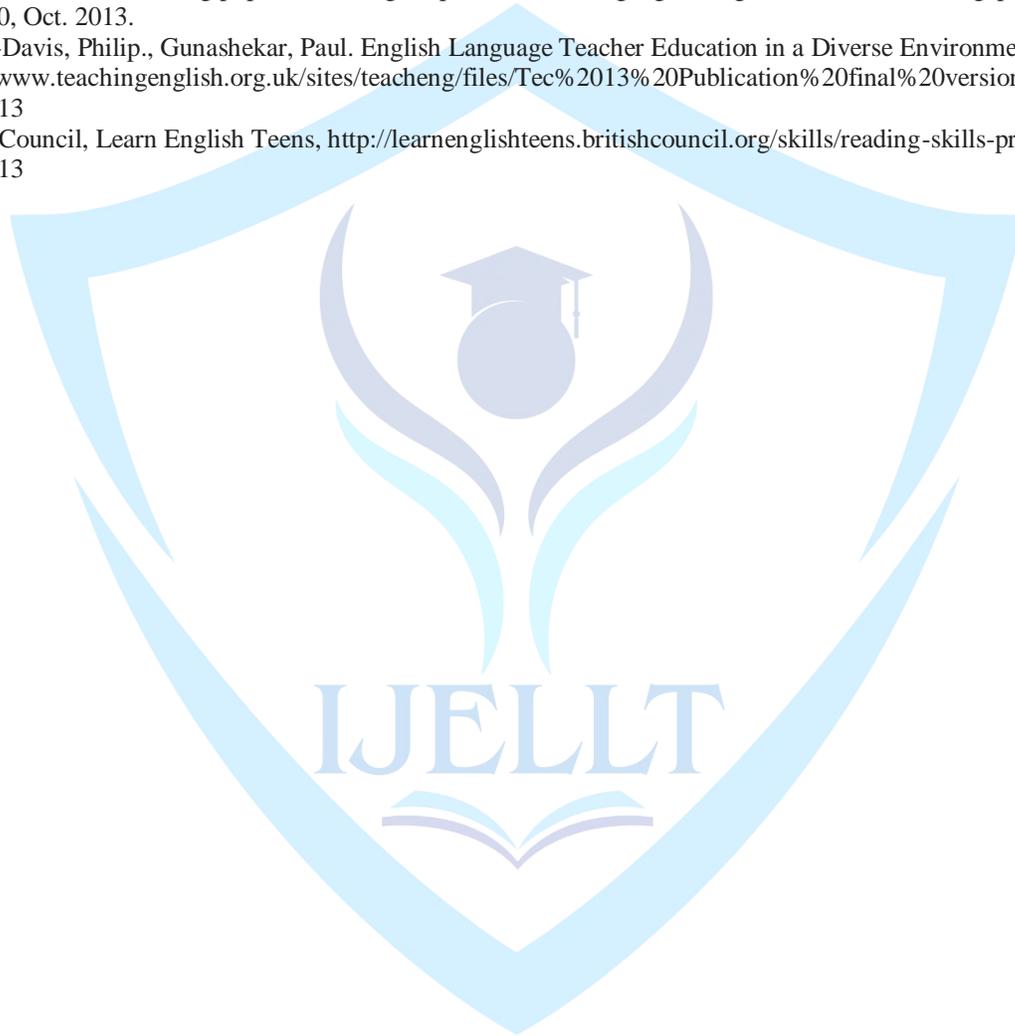
You get a free DVD player if you buy a camera from Tellys'r'us- False

You have to pay to use Jack and Jill's car park-False

Jack and Jill's is open until late- True

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