



Scaffolding our Students' Reading Abilities by Using "The Reading Workshop"

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The Importance of Teaching Reading

Reading is the skill of securing a successful foundation in all academic areas. Competent reading skills enable one to access information and learn independently. However, most of the English language textbooks in Macao are designed for second language learners. Those books introduce texts that are confined, contrived, narrow in focus and not authentic. Students may not come across with those texts in a real-life situation.

The exposure to authentic material is an essential element for a successful second-language programme. Nonetheless, there are challenges in accomplishing this in some Macao traditional schools. English is taught as a subject and not integrated into other learning topics. Most students only use English in the classroom. Some

schools even allow students speaking Chinese during English lessons. This limits students using English in authentic situations.

One's literacy of native language enhances that person's second language learning (Collier & Thomas, 1999). If students only have the opportunity to learn vocabulary out of context, it is difficult for them to understand its different forms in diverse contexts. As Antunez (2002, p.8) proposed, if the students can read out loud well, they will understand the reading materials. It is beneficial for children to hear passages read aloud and practice this skill on their own. As a result, providing time for students to read and teaching reading skills are important in the primary educational stage, especially for the EFL and ESL students.



Introducing “The Reading Workshop”

The Reading Workshop is a reading instruction that allows students to learn reading skills and strategies while they are reading books in the lesson. It was developed by Nancie Atwell. This reading approach structures reading time and activities which gives students the ownership of their reading. In this reading instruction, it highlights the importance of demonstrating from the teachers and endorsing the values of reading. Teachers read books and selected materials, then discuss what reading means to them with the students. This teaching strategy helps students become independent readers as students have enough time to read and this teaching strategy helps students become independent readers as students have enough time to read and understand.

The Implementation of “The Reading Workshop” in the Macao Context

Traditionally, “The Reading Workshop” needs around 60 to 90 minutes. With the limitation of class time, teachers should adjust the time in doing the Reading Workshop. The followings are the suggested adjustments and components.

- a. Teacher Sharing Time (10 to 15 min): Teachers introduce books for students to read or share books that the teachers like to read.
- b. Mini-lesson (15 to 20 min): Teachers highlight the learning objectives so that students can know what they need to learn in the workshop. Then, teachers do a demonstration on how to achieve particular learning objectives.
- c. Home Reading: Teachers should assign what students need to read after the mini-lessons so that students can practice reading and use the particular reading skills to read at home. In the traditional Reading Workshop, this section is the “Reading Time” when students read independently in the classroom. As class time is limited in Macao schools, thus this section can be changed to “Home Reading”.
- d. Sharing Time (20 to 30 min): After students complete the “Home Reading”, they do the sharing in front of the class. During the “Sharing Time”, students need to share what they read or what they have learnt after reading. At the beginning, teachers should give students a language frame before they do the sharing as this builds

up students' confidence with more language input.

- e. Conclusion (10 to 15 min): This is the last component in the Reading Workshop. Teachers can conclude what students have learnt in the workshop. Moreover, teachers can also let students do the self-assessment to see how much they have learnt.

If schools use the selected graded readers, teachers can use those materials for "The Reading Workshop".

Providing Literature-based Language Arts in the Curriculum

Offering English Language Arts in the school curriculum could help students developing their reading literacy. Tam and Loi (2018) suggested that Macao schools can separate English language curriculum into two parts, General English and English Language Arts. It can be five lessons for General English and two lessons for English Language Arts per week. In the English Language Arts lessons, teachers can use different reading instruction to let the students read different genres for developing their reading literacy and motivation. Meanwhile, teachers can also give some activities about developing creativity after

the students read the graded readers. Tam & U (2017) also suggested teachers can choose heroic stories as a starting point to motivate students reading stories. It is because most of the heroic stories have a great model to let the students imitate.


Planning the Systematic Reading Instructions in the Primary Education

Encouraging students reading books is a long term and challenging job for all the language teachers, especially for the English language teachers in Macao. Also, enhancing students' inner motivation is the key. As Macao students prefer reading Chinese books instead of English books, using systematic reading approaches could help. Teachers can use the Big Book Approach in primary 1 to 3. This Interactive Reading Model guides students the appropriate ways to read a book by using visual cues, the concept of print and contextualisation.




As for the upper primary, the goal is to develop students to become an independent reader. In primary 4, teachers can use "The Reading Workshop" as this reading approach highlights the learning objectives of each workshop. Students can know what they should accomplish in every



workshop. This builds the students' foundation to learn how to read a book. Also, the sharing section in "The Reading Workshop" develops students speaking skills. For primary 5, "Guided Reading" is a balanced reading instruction that builds up students' reading abilities. As for primary 6, teachers can introduce "Literature Circle" to the students. In the Literature Circle, students can experience different roles in a chapter or a book; this helps to develop their critical thinking and creativity.

Generally speaking, planning a systematic reading programme is a long-term task. Before planning the school-based reading programme, teachers should set their reading goals first. Then, they can have a clearer idea of how to achieve the goals by using different reading instructions or reading strategies. Finally, teachers should refer to "The Requirements of the Basic Academic Attainments" in developing the school-based reading programme. 

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