

B2 EAP/EAL Speed Reading Practice

Aims: To calculate your reading speed and develop strategies to read faster

Length of lesson: 90 mins

Level/age: B1+ 16/18-year-olds

Materials: China's 'Pandonomics' reading text.

(<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/13/edinburgh-zoo-pandas-tian-tian-china-pandanomics-birth-cub>)

Chunked reading text

Preparation: Photocopy enough copies of the reading text for the number of sts.

Create 10 true/false statements about the text (make sure the questions are appropriate for the level of your class B1/B2 should be more factual, C1/C2 more nuanced).

These can be on a ppt or the teacher can read them out.

Photocopy the chunked texts/texts to be chunked.

Procedure:

Task 1:

When reading *quickly* the average (native-speaker) reader reads approximately 400 wpm (words per minute). At this speed comprehension ranges from 50-70%. In order to calculate your sts' reading speed (with comprehension) follow these instructions.

1. Give out the *Pandonomics* text. Tell the sts they are going to time themselves reading the article. Tell them when to start. When they have finished reading the text, they should write down their times. You can also make a note of them.
2. Tell sts to divide the number of words in the article by their time eg.
Reading time = 4.23 minutes (259 seconds)
Words = 1043
 $1043 \div 259 = 4$ words per second (approx.) Therefore,
 $4 \times 60 = 240$ wpm (approx.)
3. Check comprehension by reading out the T/F statements or using the ppt. Sts should not look at the text whilst answering.
4. Check answers. If sts have between 6/10 or more correct then you know they have understood enough for reading at this speed. If the score is lower, then their reading, though fast, is ineffective.
5. You are now going to give them some strategies for improving their reading speed.

Task 2:

NB Sts should be aiming for a target of 250 wpm with a comprehension of 70%

1. Remember that, as sts are aiming for 70% comprehension, they do not need to understand everything. Emphasise the importance of this, as slow readers tend to read word-by-word, line-by-line.
2. **Read in chunks.** Good readers can take in several words at once, seeing words in groups and meaningful phrases. Put the sentence “As noted by many teachers a major cause of slow reading and poor comprehension is word-by-word reading” on the board. Below it write:

*As noted by many teachers a major cause of slow reading
and poor comprehension is word-by-word reading*

Tell sts that if they can read in this way, then they are reading chunks of text together. They will start to recognize the shape of common phrases like “a major cause of” very quickly, whilst more difficult phrases will take longer to decode. The important thing is to be **flexible** and spend longer where needed, but less time on unimportant or familiar chunks.

3. Give out the example below. In pairs, St1 practises reading in chunks while St2 should study his/her eye movements. St2 should be able to see St1’s eyes jumping as s/he moves between the chunks of text. Swap roles. T monitors. If sts are still reading word by word give them another short piece of text and tell the sts to mark it into chunks themselves. Check the chunking is correct and let sts practise again.

Here is an example of a text marked into meaningful chunks:

There are | three possible ways | to improve reading. The fastest | is probably
| a speed reading seminar | based upon | good materials | and | animated by |
a dynamic instructor. | It is quite usual for | a slow reader | to double | and |
even triple | his reading efficiency | during a two-day class | offering a positive
atmosphere, | carefully selected texts | and | comprehension tests. | However,
| as this rapid | and | encouraging improvement | is not | sufficiently
anchored, | it often fades | with time.

4. Now that sts are aware of their reading speed and strategies to improve, give them a text to read individually at regular intervals to check their reading speed. Find the word count of any given text and then calculate a realistic time limit by which to read it. Improving sts’ reading speed is fundamental to improving reading skills in general.

B1+ EAP/EAL Speed Reading Practice – Text

Zoos weigh up the costs of China's 'pandanomics'

With China asking £600,000 a year to rent pandas and the price of food soaring, do the sums of having pandas add up?

The webcam shows a pile of bamboo shoots in Edinburgh zoo's purpose-built giant panda house. Yang Guang is asleep off-camera and Tian Tian, his possibly pregnant mate, is in a separate enclosure. Meanwhile, Iain Valentine, the zoo's director of pandas, paces around the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland's office like an expectant father.

If Tian Tian gives birth, it will be in the next few days. If she were to, the zoo's financial security would be assured – even as Scotland decides its political future. A panda cub would be a conservation superstar, attracting millions of visitors at up to £16 a head. But if Tian Tian isn't even pregnant, the zoo faces declining public interest, rising costs and possible financial ruin.

The next few hours are crucial, said Valentine. "We cannot be certain how long it will be before we call it a day with Tian Tian. We are coming to the end. Shortly she will hit what we call base with her progesterone levels and only at that point will we be certain – she will simply either give birth or not."

Parents or not, Tian Tian and Yang Guang are the animal equivalents of Premier League footballers; they cost a fortune to buy and maintain, but are guaranteed to draw crowds. But academic research into "pandanomics" also suggests that they and other captive giant pandas have become strategic assets deployed by China for geopolitical advantage.

According to Valentine, the Edinburgh pair have more than paid their way since they arrived in 2011. "Zoo numbers have increased by four million people in two years," he said.

However, the costs are rising and experience from other zoos suggests that the numbers will tail off if no cub is born. The pandas are rented from the Chinese government for 10 years and the contract stipulates that Edinburgh must pay £600,000 a year for the pair. Any cub that is born must be returned to China after two years. Should one die because of human error, it is understood that the zoo must pay £300,000.

But that is just the start. The zoo had to spend nearly £300,000 to house its pandas and has now been hit by rising bamboo costs. When the pair arrived in 2011, it cost around £70,000 a year to import fresh shoots from France, but this has risen to £100,000, said Valentine. To offset the costs, the zoo has now planted 3,000 clumps.

Having a panda can be ruinous, say some zoos, and could even take money away from other conservation work. Washington, Atlanta, Memphis and San

Diego zoos are said to have spent \$33m more on pandas from 2000-03 than they received from showing them.

During the cold war, Mao gave pandas away as a sign of diplomatic friendship. But World Resources Institute researcher Kathleen Buckingham, with a team at Oxford University, last year studied China's recent panda loans and concluded that all were linked to trade.

The Edinburgh deal, overseen by China's vice-premier, Li Keqiang, coincided with a £2.6bn contract for Britain to supply China with petrochemical and renewable energy technologies, Jaguar cars and enough salmon to double Scotland's production.

Other panda pairs were loaned to Canadian and Australian zoos after negotiations for uranium, oil and minerals. Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Macao all got pandas after signing free-trade agreements. In France, the panda loan to Beauval zoo coincided with a \$20bn deal for nuclear giant Areva to supply China with uranium oxide.

"A new phase of panda diplomacy is under way. Panda loans are associated with nations supplying China with valuable resources and symbolise China's willingness to build trade relationships," said Buckingham.

She likens the loans to Asian rulers' traditional gifts to foreign powers of rare white elephants in the knowledge that they would cost a fortune to keep but ensure closer relations. "The panda may be the modern-day white elephant – a powerful emblem of the modern Chinese nation," she said.

By next year, 20 zoos outside China are expected to have pandas. The growing numbers sent abroad are thought to be linked to the 2008 magnitude eight Sichuan earthquake, which destroyed much of the animals' habitat. China was left with a surplus of captive pandas, but nowhere for them to go.

Some conservationists argue that with only 1,600 animals left in the wild, foreign zoos are helping to breed a diverse population fit to be released. But critics say only 90 cubs have been born outside China in 35 years.

Links between foreign zoos and Chinese researchers have led to advances in captive breeding, said Valentine. "There are now 340 giant pandas in captivity. China is playing the long game. Until now it has been trying to build up the captive population to between 300 and 500. That's the magic number for genetic integrity. "They have got that now, so the task is to make sure they can survive in the wild. In the next few years we can expect tens of pandas to be introduced into the wild," he said. However, only 10 have been released since 1983, with just two of them still alive. Six were recaptured after suffering significant weight loss, one was probably killed by wild pandas, and another is believed to have died, said Buckingham.

American academic Sarah Bexell, who works at the Chengdu research base in Sichuan, where more than 100 giant pandas have been born, said: "The

future is immensely grim for them. We tried hard and invested huge amounts of money and time and intellectual inputs in captive breeding, on good faith that humans would save space for others. We failed."

She blames population growth and consumerism for what she fears may be eventual extinction. "The Chinese institutions have done a great job, but people don't want to live in poverty and there is no room for people and pandas. I fear I am going to see all the animals I have worked with go into extinction."

[...] But back in Edinburgh, Valentine is still hoping that a cub will be born. "I have not given up yet," he said.

Source: Vidal, J. (2014). Zoo's weigh up the cost of China's 'Pandanomics'. The Guardian. [online]. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/13/edinburgh-zoo-pandas-tian-tian-china-pandanomics-birth-cub> accessed on: 15th September 2014.

Chunked Reading Texts

There are | three possible ways | to improve reading. The fastest | is probably | a speed reading seminar | based upon | good materials | and | animated by | a dynamic instructor. | It is quite usual for | a slow reader | to double | and | even triple | his reading efficiency | during a two-day class | offering a positive atmosphere, | carefully selected texts | and | comprehension tests. | However, | as this rapid | and | encouraging improvement | is not | sufficiently anchored, | it often fades | with time.

To create dictionaries | of modern English, | the enthusiastic | and | learned volunteers | who sent in | their quotations | to the *OED*, | have been | largely replaced | by the computer | – and by equally enthusiastic | and learned | IT specialists | and | computational linguists. | Instead of getting people | to read texts intensively, | dictionary publishers | now amass | as many electronically held texts | of different kinds | as they can.

(Taken from Butterfield, J., 2008. *Damp Squid*. OUP)

Texts to chunk

In a European context, some British conventions, such as driving on the left and sticking to a different currency, can seem perverse or eccentric. Just as perverse and wayward in comparison with most European languages is the spelling system of English. It is notoriously irregular. So what would a regular spelling system look like? The principle is simple: there would be a one-to-one relationship between letters and sounds. Every letter or combination of letters would invariably represent one sound; and each sound would invariably be written the same way.

(Taken from Butterfield, J., 2008. *Damp Squid*. OUP)

Conspiracy theories, misinformation and speculation about coronavirus have flooded social media. But who starts these rumours? And who spreads them? To take one example, a prankster created a screenshot of a fake government text that claimed the recipient had been fined for leaving the house too many times. He thought it would be funny to scare people breaking lockdown rules. After encouraging his followers to share it on Instagram, it found its way to local Facebook groups, where it was posted by worried residents, some of whom took it seriously.

(Adapted from the BBC website at bbc.com)