

## ESL Developmental Continuum P–10

### Teaching strategy – Before reading – Factual texts

#### Focuses on

Speaking Listening **Reading** Writing

#### Most useful for students at stages

**A1 A2 BL B1 B2 B3 SL S1 S2 S3 S4**

#### Purpose of this activity

A number of before reading activities can be used to prepare ESL students for reading particular texts. They support ESL students to have a clear understanding of what they are about to read and why. Before reading activities also help build an understanding that texts are written and structured for different audiences and purposes. This helps the students to consider how they might go about reading a particular text and what forms of language they might expect to find in a particular text type.

#### How this helps ESL students in particular

Before reading activities:

- set a clear purpose for reading
- draw on students' background knowledge
- allow known vocabulary to be revised, and new vocabulary to be introduced
- develop and extend students' knowledge of how different texts are structured
- allow for a focus on the language choices that can be expected within a text
- help students to consider how they might go about reading a text.

#### Before reading activities to use with ESL students – Factual texts

##### Brainstorm and Categorise

List what students know about a topic before reading the text using words or groups of words. Have students sort their information according to sub-headings.

##### Structured overview

Provide an overview or outline of the features of a selected text so that all students can see it (e.g. on an overhead transparency, on the whiteboard), for example:

- Main heading            Living in a tropical Rain Forest
- Sub-heading            Living in levels
- Labelled diagram      Rain Forest Levels
- Sub-heading            Living with poor soil
- Labelled picture        Roots of a rain forest tree.

Discuss the layout including the ordering of information or ideas. Have students look through the text to locate the various features. Ask students to predict what they might read about in each of the sections.

### **Before and After Charts**

- Students list what they know about a topic before reading. Students can work individually, in small groups or the teacher can scribe.
- After reading, list what they found out and compare with the before list.

### **What's the text type?**

- Examine the text to be read.
- Look at the cover, pages, illustrations etc.
- Ask students to predict what kind of text it might be, its purpose, the intended audience.
- Ask students to provide reasons or evidence from the text for their predictions.

### **Grammar focus**

- Establish the text type and its purpose.
- Ask students to identify language features that they would expect to be in the text. For example, imperatives in a procedural text, words to sequence an explanation (e.g. after that, then, when) or that create a cause-effect link (e.g. because, so, if, as a result).

### **Skimming and scanning**

Students need to be familiar with the strategies of skimming and scanning.

Skimming involves getting an overview of the text:

- Provide students with a copy of a text, preferably one with headings and sub-headings.
- Have them glance over the text to get an overview of the text (skimming) and to write down or discuss what they think they might find in each section of the text.
- Compare with others and confirm predictions after reading the text.

Scanning involves looking for a specific piece of information:

- Provide students with a copy of the text.
- List questions for students to answer, making sure that the question includes a word in the text that will help the students locate the information.
- Students can work individually, in pairs or small groups.

### **Acknowledgments/reference**

Education Department of Western Australia (2004). *Reading: Resource Book, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Port Melbourne: Rigby Heinemann