The changing face of reading

Level

Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A2–B1 and above)

Comment

This eLesson looks at the development of reading, leading to today's ereaders. Although the text is centred on the historical development of reading, it is likely that students will find the notion of ereading of most interest so this area is expanded on after the reading tasks. The discussion phase relating to this may take off at different points between stages 3 and 6. Be flexible and responsive, allowing students to talk if and when they are motivated.

How to use the lesson

1   Show students a novel that you are reading at the moment (a paper one!). Dictate the following questions: *What book are you reading at the moment? How many books a year do you read? Do you use a library? What for? Is reading becoming a less common activity in your country among young people? Have you ever seen or read an electronic book?* Students discuss in pairs.

2   Elicit what people wrote on before paper was invented. Write the word *iPad* on the board and elicit what students know about it. If you think your students will know a lot about this product, put them in groups of three to discuss this, using the prompt *What's different about it?* If you have the facilities, this would be an appropriate point to show them a visual or even one of the videos of the iPad, with a focus on the iBooks app.

3   Tell students they are going to read a text about the development of reading over the centuries. Draw a scale on the board, past to future, with the ebook on the right to indicate the newest writing medium. Elicit what should go at the opposite end. Let students do exercise 1 in pairs. Clarify any vocabulary as appropriate.

4   Students read the text (exercise 2). Refer them to the Glossary at this point.

5   Students complete exercise 3 independently. Let students compare their answers in pairs before feedback.

6   Do exercise 4 as a group brainstorm, prompting them to use two columns, for 'for' and 'against'. You may find that the discussion about ebooks takes off here (see Comment above). Hear some of their ideas at the end. Particularly with lower levels, write up their ideas, on both sides of the argument.

7   Students read exercise 5 and complete the task, writing F or A next to each point for 'for' or 'against'. Early finishers can also tick the points that they themselves mentioned in the previous stage, putting a star by any new ideas. Take feedback.

8   Students work in different groups to discuss the points in exercise 6. Monitor as they work and pick up later on any points of interest. You could hold a class vote at the end about whether or not they think ereading will ultimately be the norm.

9   If you would like a mini language focus, this text could serve to consolidate any studying you have done of the passive. Ask students to locate and circle as many examples as they can find in the text; elicit why it is a very natural structure to use in a text such as this (the focus is on the writing medium, rather than the writers).

10 Ask students to summarize what the speakers say with one adjective: *An ebook / book is _____.* Put a selection of adjectives on the board appropriate for your students' level, eg *fragile*, *reliable*, *helpful*, *environmentally friendly*, *motivating*, *vulnerable (to something)*, *unhealthy*, *convenient*, *robust*. Higher level students could try summing up some of the statements in pairs without the selection.

Answer key

1, 2

h, g, d, i, b, f, c, a, e

3 Wording of answers may vary.

1 iBooks lets customers read, browse and buy books.
2 More and more people are reading ebooks, and this number is likely to grow.
3 The different writing materials mentioned in the text are clay, bone, tortoise shells, papyrus, animal skins, paper.
4 The first type of printing used wooden blocks.
5 The huge grown in the number of printing presses meant that books were made in large numbers and more cheaply.
6 The printing press changed society because reading was no longer just in the hands of the few.
7 The way of reading has developed over history, changing from being public and oral to silent and private.

4

Students' own answers.

5

a Comments for ereading: b, c, e, f, g, i, j, l, n
b Comments against ereading: a, d, h, k, m

6

Students' own answers.

Related websites

The following websites might be useful, for either yourself or your students.

Ereaders:
http://www.apple.com/ipad/ipad-video/ (video)
http://www.sony.co.uk/hub/reader-ebook
http://www.digitaltrends.com/gadgets/apple-ipad-versus-amazon-kindle/
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/8036436.stm (video)

The development of reading:
http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Papyrus
http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Printing_press
http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/sacredtexts/podsusanwhitfield.html
http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/press.html

Paper versus ebooks:
http://hubpages.com/hub/Ebooks-vs-paperbacks-The-Pros-and-Cons
http://users.california.com/~parvin/ebooks.html
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/8037058.stm