READING IN PAIRS

Peer tutoring for reading and speaking in English as a foreign language
**READING IN PAIRS, OBJECTIVES AND CONTENTS**

*Reading in pairs* is a set of materials shaping an educational programme that uses peer tutoring—at school between two students, and at home, between a family member and a student—. The main objective of this programme is to improve reading comprehension and speaking in English as a foreign language among students of *Cicle Superior* of Primary (10-12 years old) and students of *1st Cicle* of Secondary (12-14 years old). These materials, adjusted to the school’s context and necessities, must allow schools to generate new interventions in order to achieve the following objectives:

- Providing teachers with inclusive methodologies. Peer learning, especially peer tutoring, gives the opportunity of seeing diversity as a positive value: it is thanks to differences (between tutor and tutee) that students learn.
- Developing new English instruction techniques. Peer tutoring and family involvement can complete teaching and learning interventions for the linguistic competences, as they provide numerous opportunities for oral interaction.
- Improving the students’ reading competence, especially reading comprehension and speaking skills. A well-organised work of reading comprehension techniques can ease the challenge. Moreover, increasing the timing of exposure to oral communication gives students more opportunities to develop their oral skills. Students should achieve a level of skill that allows them to continue learning independently throughout their lives.
- Encouraging cooperation among students. The ability to cooperate develops social skills and basic attitudes for the democratic life and for the knowledge society we live in.
- Fostering family involvement in school activities. Schools can offer more opportunities for family participation, giving parents the possibility to pursue an initial training and become their children’s tutors at home. If parents have little knowledge of English, it is a useful resource to interchange the roles, that is, children can act as their parents’ tutors.

Below we describe with which key competences the *Reading in pairs* programme can help achieve the objectives and contents for *Cicle Superior* of Primary and *1st Cicle* of Secondary Catalan Curriculum in foreign languages.

1. **READING IN PAIRS, CONTRIBUTION TO KEY COMPETENCES**

As we said before, the main objectives of the *Reading in pairs* programme are the improvement of reading competence and oral skills, two key competences which are essential for a global learning (*Llei d’Educació de Catalunya 12/2009*).\(^1\)

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\(^1\) We have selected the curriculum framework of Catalonia in order to arrange the programme in a real educational context, where English is the Foreign Language. Of course, teachers from other contexts can use this guide as an example, and from their knowledge, they can make the necessary adjustments in the context of their own curriculum.
According to the Education Law published by Generalitat de Catalunya (LEC, Title V, chapter I, art. 52), the curriculum must be oriented to the acquisition, among others, of good communication skills in any language: oral expression and comprehension, written expression and reading comprehension and the knowledge of new languages. In Primary and Secondary school, reading comprehension, reading and speaking are essential skills that allow students to develop in a personal and social level. In this sense, the implementation of the Reading in pairs programme could help with the development of these competences.

On the other hand, the Reading in pairs programme can contribute to achieving the objectives proposed in “L’escola catalana, un marc per al plurilingüisme” (a linguistic project developed by the Catalan government), one of the strategies developed in Pla de Govern Català 2013-16 by Generalitat de Catalunya. This strategy stipulates that speakers must be fluent in several languages. Specifically, it states that we must know the two official languages and, at least, one foreign language, based on the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages”.

The programme takes into account the Education Law, Llei 12/2009 of 10th July about the “Règim Lingüístic del Sistema Educatiu de Catalunya” (some linguistic rules for education), and two new documents on how to organise the instruction, Decret 119/2015 of 23rd June about the organisation of Primary education in the section of the “Curriculum de Cicle Superior de Llengua Estrangera” and Decret 187/2015 of 25th August about the organisation of Secondary education.

Reading in pairs also facilitates diversity outreach through a cooperative method (peer tutoring) and promotes family involvement in the educational process of their children.

The Reading in pairs programme provides students with some elements and contributes to the development of the following key competences, from Decret 119/2015 (23rd June) (the educational law in Catalonia).

Audiovisual and Linguistic Communicative Competence (C1)

People build up their knowledge from the interaction with others. Learning is a social activity requiring good communication for the proper understanding of new information and the building of more complex knowledge networks. This competence refers to the use of language as an oral and written tool of representation, reality interpretation and comprehension, knowledge building and communication of thoughts and feelings, behaviour organisation and self-regulation. The Reading in pairs programme is based on communication between students (tutor and tutee) or between a family member and a child.

Information Treatment and Digital Information Competence (C5)

This competence refers to the essential ability for searching, obtaining, processing and communicating information, and for its transformation into knowledge. It embraces different skills, from information access to its communication in different forms. The Activity Sheets that the programme proposes favour the development of working methods fostering autonomy, efficiency, responsibility, critical sense when selecting, treating and using different technologies and forms of information.

Citizenship and Social Competence (C6)

Cooperation and coexistence are two key elements for the construction of a democratic society with engaged citizens. Different complex skills and knowledge are part of this competence allowing the participation, decision-taking, behaviour in different situations and responsibility for personal choices. The programme suggests peer tutoring (cooperative learning method) as a basic working structure. For this reason, the implementation of the programme in the classroom could favour the students’ participation and provide a model for a caring and tolerant society.

Learning to Learn Competence (C7)

Learning to learn involves having different skills to start and continue learning in an efficient and independent way, according to our own needs and objectives. This competence has two basic dimensions: the awareness of our own capacities and strategies in order to improve them, and the development of a personal feeling of competence based on motivation, self-esteem and learning enjoyment.
### READING COMPREHENSION DIMENSION

*Competence 4.* Use of strategies in order to get basic information and understand basic or adapted written texts, from daily life, mass media and school environment.

*Competence 5.* Use of visual, discursive and linguistic basic features from a text with a clear structure in order to understand it.

*Competence 6.* Use of search tools to access the understanding of texts.

**Contents:**
- Different kinds of texts.
- Comprehension strategies.
- Reading aloud.
- Silent reading.
- Discursive structure and organisation of the text.
- Text morphosyntax: sentence connectors, punctuation.
- Daily and specific vocabulary.
- Semantic components of language: comparison, derivation, figurative sense, false friends.
- Searching strategies.
- Information sources: digital and paper.
- Strategies for acquiring and transferring knowledge.
- Using digital sources.

### LITERARY DIMENSION

*Competence 10.* Understanding and valuing basic literary texts, real or adapted, according to the students’ age.

**Contents:**
- Different kinds of texts.
- Reading aloud.
- Silent reading.
- Discursive structure and organisation of the text.
- Daily and specific vocabulary.
- Semantic components of language: comparison, derivation, figurative sense, false friends.
- Expressive elements: non-verbal and prosodic.
- Literary texts valuation.
- Basic and important ideas.
- Using digital sources.

### TABLE 2. CONTENTS FOR CICLE SUPERIOR

**Oral communication:**
- Understanding daily social messages.
- Understanding specific vocabulary from descriptions, narrative texts and other situations.
- Basic rules for oral interaction.
- Reproduction of basic oral texts such as songs, poems, rhymes…
- Interest and respect for other people’s oral interactions.

**Reading comprehension:**
- Recognition and identification of word and short texts.
- Comprehension of known words and simple sentences which have been studied in class.
- Reading strategies: using verbal and visual context and previous knowledge about the situation or topic.
- Using classroom library resources and reading books in the foreign language.
- Interest in learning about books written in the foreign language.

**Literary education:**
- Comprehension of simple literary texts (stories, poems, songs…), especially with an audio support.
- Reproduction of simple literary texts learnt by heart using images.
- Using the classroom and school library to search literary texts pursuing their own interests and in any format (image albums, comics, stories, poems…).
- Interest and curiosity for looking at stories or books (in different formats) written in the foreign language.
PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

As in any educational project, the success of the Reading in pairs programme is strongly linked to the motivation shown by its participants. Therefore, it is essential that both the teachers and the schools involved see Reading in pairs in a positive way. This programme is based on the idea that diversity makes learning possible. Through peer tutoring, students and the school community have the possibility to view how diversity, far from being a problem, appears as a positive element for the pedagogical task.

It is also important that peer tutors are aware of the learning opportunities that this programme brings and of the role of the tutor. By becoming the facilitator, the tutor is able to empathise with the role of the teacher, which makes this experience enriching. It also creates an environment in which the tutee takes full advantage of the personalised attention that the tutor provides, a unique opportunity which is not often created in the traditional classroom environment. This teaching framework allows the tutor and the tutee to learn.

At times, involving the students’ family and achieving a higher rate of participation signifies a challenge. The programme aims to encourage family members to create a space within the home in which the opportunity to establish a relationship of trust is given. It also provides the parents and other family members with direct support and guidance during the children’s process of schooling, which shows to be successful when the school is involved in the training of the family members to fulfil the role of becoming the children’s reading tutors at home. Although family members receive support and training, some of them may not feel capable to take on the role of tutors. Therefore, in some cases, exchanging the roles within the family and making the children fulfil the role of the tutors is considered a good option.

1. PAIRING STUDENTS

In some cases, pairing the students can take place during the previous training sessions, and it is usually the teacher who determines the pairing of the students as a first step of the programme. The criteria for the creation of the pairs should be adjusted to the school’s context. However, we will discuss some guidelines that can make the process more effective and efficient.

If we opt for the cross-age tutoring model, research suggests that the difference in competence between the tutor and the tutee should not be very wide. The reason is that if there is a big difference it may slow down the interaction within the pair, which can result in the tutor feeling demotivated or ultimately bored. It is therefore advisable to pair up children whose age difference is no bigger than 2 years, and all the pairs are recommended to have a similar competence difference between the members. Most teachers are aware of the students’ differences in levels of proficiency, and are able to pair the participants up according to these differences. However, testing the students’ reading comprehension and oral proficiency in order to make the pairing process more accurate and valid is recommended. Once the test results are obtained, the students who get the highest marks in both groups are paired up, as shown in Figure 1.

If we opt for the fixed same age tutoring model, the students are listed according to their linguistic ability, within the same class or from different groups. One single list is created, which
includes all the participants regardless of whether they are from the same or different groups. The list is then divided into two halves (group A and group B), and the first student in the list in group A is paired up with the first student in the list in group B; the same procedure is followed with the second students in both lists, and so on.

In addition, when students belong to the same class, there is the possibility to create reciprocal peer tutoring, in which the tutor and tutee exchange roles in each session or every week. Therefore, reciprocal tutoring requires creating pairs in which the students have a similar level of competence. Students are paired up following the pairing procedures in same-age and cross-age tutoring, although in this case, students are paired up with the next student in the list. See figure 1.

Regardless of whether the cross age tutoring model or the same age model is used and whether it is reciprocal or fixed, we should consider the idea that some changes in the pairs may take place during the process. These changes will most likely be general, and will not be individual isolated changes. We suggest you make only one change and ask tutors to pass a detailed report of the tutee's progress to the new tutors. A brief report could also be asked for from the tutees. However, we must not forget that success in peer tutoring requires students to have time to learn how to develop their role, and adjust it to the characteristics of their peers. That is why we advise to carefully decide on what changes to make within the pair and to give students enough time and guidance to learn to work with their peers.

Regarding the creation of pairs in the family context, we would like to make a couple of suggestions. Firstly, schools must make a creative effort to advertise the programme and its benefits to the families, but especially to those families whose participation may be most useful to them. Logically, these will not be families who already motivate children by involving them in cultural or educational events, and those, surely, will be the first showing interest. It would be useful to reach families who need to establish spaces for educational dialogue and, that have often expressed their difficulties in doing so. In this sense, it is strongly recommended to find the most appropriate way to advertise the programme to the families. It is worth considering the use of letters (by mail or through the children); personal invitations (oraly); posters in the school; articles in the school newsletter or in the local press, etc. We can also consider the need to use support elements, such as for example, the student themselves, in order to encourage their parents to participate; or social workers visiting families who do not usually receive information. When the school has im-

![Figure 1. Pairing students sample.](image-url)
1. PRESENTATION OF THE READING IN PAIRS PROGRAMME

Reading in pairs

Peer tutoring programme (students and families) to improve English as a foreign language.

Dear students,

In this newsletter, we will show you what you are going to do during the following weeks, in order to improve your English as a foreign language. The work which starts here in the school is combined with activities to be done at home and in which your parents can participate.

Your collaboration and participation is really important for the proper development of the work. We suggest how to improve your speaking and reading comprehension because it is something essential in order to learn in school and in your life. This is not going to be done individually, but by helping and being helped by classmates.

You are all different; you all think differently, work differently and you all learn in different ways. We would like to benefit from these differences by encouraging you to support each other in order to improve your reading and speaking skills.

For this purpose, it is important to follow the instructions given by your teachers carefully. After the initial training, you will work in pairs, one of you as the tutor and the other one, as the tutee. Both roles are equally important, as one depends on the other. Tutors will learn lots of things, because when they “teach” and explain something to their classmates, they need to learn it really well in advance. Tutees will learn because they will always receive adjusted and personalised help from their tutors in order to improve their reading and speaking skills.

We encourage your families to do something similar at home, so you are able to learn a little more. Tell them to be either your reading tutor or reading tutee; you can also be their tutor, and thus improve your English together. You will also have a good time together doing the activities.

We encourage you to work hard and help your partner (whether you are acting as tutor or tutee) progress as much as possible. Don’t forget: success depends on you!

Come on! Let’s start!
2. INITIAL ASSESSMENT (one example per stage)

INITIAL EVALUATION ASSESSMENT, PRIMARY EDUCATION

Before reading...
If you take a look at the title and the pictures, what do you think the text is about? Have you ever studied this topic at school? Do you know the names of the parts of the body that appear in the text below? Do you know what the function of the skeleton is?


Reading comprehension

1. Do you think this text is easy to understand? Why? Did you learn anything new from it? What?
2. Make two columns and write the names from the picture of the boy depending on the position: above the waist or below the waist.
3. Taking into account the information in the text, state if the following sentences are True or False:
   - The spine is made of small bones called vertebrae
   - The bones are linked by muscles and tendons
   - Skeleton and bones only protect the organs
   - Every bone usually has two names
   - The spine is a short bone
4. Do you know the ordinary name of the bones in the text? Could you say the name of other bones in our body?
5. What do you think is the meaning of this sentence from the text?
   You are the shape you are because of your skeleton.
6. Do you know what happens if someone’s spine is broken? Why?
Before reading...
Look at the picture; do you know who these men are? Do you know where they’re from? Have you ever been there? What do you think their profession is? What do you think the text is about?

The Fab Four (part I)

The Beatles, or the Fab Four, were one of the most famous bands in the history of pop music.
The line up:
John Lennon (vocalist): born 9 October 1940, died 8 December 1980
Paul McCartney (vocalist and guitarist): born 18 June 1942
George Harrison (vocalist and guitarist): born 25 February 1943, died 29 November 2001
Ringo Starr (drummer): born 7 July 1940

They were all from Liverpool originally. George Harrison and Paul McCartney took the same bus to school, and found out they had music and guitars in common.
In 1956, Paul introduced George to a band called the Quarrymen which John Lennon sang in.
George was only 14 at the time and not old enough to join the group. But a few times he filled in for the regular guitarist and gradually became a member of the band.
The Quarrymen became The Beatles, performing regularly at the Cavern Club in Liverpool, and within another four years the foursome became worldwide superstars.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_1680000/newsi d_1684900/1684965.stm

Reading comprehension
1. Why do you think they were known as The Fab Four? The text is part I. Were you able to guess what part two was about?
2. Match the names with the musical instruments that they used to play:
   - John Lennon: Guitar
   - Paul McCartney: Drums
   - George Harrison: No musical instrument, just a singer
   - Ringo Starr: Guitar
3. Are the following sentences True or False?
   a) George Harrison was the eldest member of the group.
   b) Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr are still alive.
   c) Paul was the singer of the Quarrymen.
   d) George was 18 when he became a superstar.
4. Fill in the gaps with ONE word:
   “The ______________ were originally from ___________________. George Harrison and Paul McCartney took the same __________ to school, and found out they had __________ and__________ in common.”
5. What kind of music did they play according to the text?
6. Do you know of this music genre? Do you know of other groups playing this music genre? Can you think about other music genres?
7. Look at the picture. What are they wearing? How is their hairstyle? Do you think this was something usual or something new at that time (the 60’s)?
8. What do you think about famous people? What kind of life do you think they have? Would you like to be a famous person?

Extra activities
1. Ask your mum and dad (or grandpa and granny) if they used to listen to this group and what their favourite song was (or still is!!!!)
2. Listen to the songs “Let it be” and “Yellow Submarine”. Do you like them? Why? Why not?