

Reviewed work:

Teaching Reading. (2003). Jen Tindale. Macquarie University: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research. Pp. 62. ISBN: 1864088516. \$10.50

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Although ESL teachers will concentrate on various content matter in their classrooms, and will likely have wide-ranging purposes of instruction for their students, it is nearly certain that all teachers will arrive at a point when they wonder how they can teach reading more effectively.

Teaching Reading, part of a series dedicated to connecting theory, research, and practice, is designed to serve as a practical tool for teaching professionals. The book focuses on research projects recently conducted with adult ESL students in the Australasian context, and seeks to unite this research with the practices of those who are engaged daily in the task of teaching reading. Each chapter contains two central questions relating to various aspects of reading teaching, and these questions serve as the organizing principle for each chapter. After introducing the questions for each chapter, the author leads the reader to consider research related to the topic, as well as the findings and implications of that research.

The format of the book is designed to be reader-friendly. The reader finds quotations that represent what researchers say on the left hand side of the page, while on the right he/she is presented with a bulleted list of points summarizing major findings related to the opening questions of the chapter. There is also an additional component in each chapter related to "Suggestions for the Classroom". These lists provide practitioners with ideas to consider and steps to take in order to improve the quality of reading instruction they are providing their students.

A brief introductory chapter states that the book is "generally aimed at ESL teachers who teach reading as part of a course that integrates reading, writing, speaking and listening" (p.9). It also briefly considers a range of possible definitions of reading by summarizing various approaches (bottom-up, top-down, interaction between top-down and bottom-up, and new literacy approaches).

The nine chapters that follow this introduction address learner needs, program planning, text selection, vocabulary development, reading skills and strategies, reading for meaning, reading fluency, extensive and narrow reading, and conducting classroom research. Chapter 1, for example, discusses learner needs by asking the questions "What factors need to be considered when analyzing students' reading needs?" and "How can information about student needs be collected and used?" To examine these questions, the author highlights research conducted by

Hood, Solomon and Burns (1996: 12) who state that "we should consider whether students have adequate reading skills in English to cope with the reading demands of learning in the classroom" and Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks and Yallop (2000: 12) who encourage teachers to "analyse students' language learning needs prior to and at the beginning of a course of study in order to determine that the texts included in the course are appropriate and relevant." Other research studies (Feez 1998; Cobb & Horst 2001; and Grabe & Stoller 2002) are also presented in this chapter's summary of research findings. The final section of the chapter, *Suggestions for the classroom*, includes practical ideas for teachers. Chapter 1 suggests carrying out class surveys to explore L1 and L2 reading practices. It includes specific questions (i.e., What do you read regularly in your own language? What would you like to read in English, but don't or can't?) to enable teachers to learn more about their students' backgrounds.

Subsequent chapters address the following additional questions: "What is the relationship between reading and writing, speaking and listening?"; "Should reading texts be simplified for second language learners?"; "If students can use reading strategies, and understand the vocabulary, will they fully comprehend a text?"; "How can teachers help students to increase their reading fluency?"; "What are the differences between extensive, intensive and narrow reading?"; and "How can teachers research reading in their classrooms, and what can this research be used for?" Each of the above questions is treated by adhering to the same format presented above for the questions in Chapter 1. This format allows teachers to reference related research quickly and also provides a means for them to make clear classroom connections.

Although some readers may long for a more detailed consideration of the questions presented at the beginning of each chapter, it should be recognized that this is not the aim of the book. This book, and the series of which it is a part, is designed to be a short, practical guide to assist teachers in gaining insights into common dilemmas in teaching L2 reading. Likewise, it seeks to enable practitioners to remain aware of current research findings, and to apply recommendations from research into their specific teaching contexts. This book succeeds in making research accessible to practicing teachers, and nicely balances theory and practice. For those readers whose curiosity is piqued by the research highlighted in each chapter, or for those who want more detailed information on a given topic, a complete bibliography is included. There is also an additional listing of titles provided for further reading.

References

- Butt, D., Fahey, R. Feez, S., Spinks, S., & Yallop, C. (2000). *Using functional grammar: An explorer's guide*. Sydney: NCELTR.
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- Feez, S. (1998). *Text-based syllabus design*. Macquarie University: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research.
- Grabe, W. & Stoller, F. (2002). *Teaching and Researching Reading*. Harlow: Longman.