

A Book Review of *Becoming a Reading Teacher: Connecting Research and Practice*

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Abstract: The book *Becoming a Reading Teacher: Connecting Research and Practice* aims to encourage readers to regard reading as a lifelong habit. To bridge the gap between teachers and researchers, this book is structured around four parts: reading as a linguistic process, reading as a personal experience, reading as a collective experience, and reading as a classroom practice. The definition of a reading teacher can be interpreted in two ways: the teacher who builds readings into the lesson and the teacher who provides the opportunity for learners to be readers, but who is a reader themselves. Such teachers regard reading as a lifelong learning habit and pass on the enthusiasm to learners, eventually creating a reading culture beyond the classroom. However, the necessity for reading teachers to participate in the research may be explained as follows. Firstly, new research may change one's mind. What's more, research allows teachers to turn their difficulties, surprises, and challenges into questions, and to seek answers to those questions. In addition, research helps teachers overcome the challenges in teaching by discovering new strategies. Research can also help to prove teachers' choices and decisions in teaching. Secondly, research allows teachers to see the role they play in the bigger picture. Research connects teachers with others and gives them a broader and shared perspective on their questions and experiences. Last but not least, research informs and promotes changes in policy, thinking, and so on.

Keywords: Research; Practices; Reading; Lifelong habit

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1. Introduction

Teachers who do not choose to participate in research cannot ensure the feasibility and effectiveness of the research and cannot produce a positive impact on themselves and their learners. In order to bridge the gap between teachers and researchers, the book *Becoming a Reading Teacher: Connecting Research and Practice* is divided into four parts: reading as a linguistic process, reading as a personal experience, reading as a collective experience, and reading as a classroom practice. The core purpose of this book is to show how research can offer a method to re-evaluate and re-energize reading in the ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom. While discussing this, this book takes reading teaching a few steps further and beyond the classroom. The book

not only offers new teaching ideas and possibilities for teachers but also refreshes teachers' view of how reading fits into the development of language and reading life.

2. Current research

As the starting section, Part 1 of the book explains what reading includes, that is decoding symbols and matching combinations of them. Although experts seem to agree that knowledge of reading is important for teaching reading, the development of instruments for measuring teachers' reading knowledge has received limited attention from researchers ^[1]. Moreover, it discusses different reasons and ways people read, for example, instantaneous and involuntary, and extended reading. Here, we read for the purpose of gathering information and the pleasure of engagement. Reading for pleasure ensures that reading is not an assigned duty, but an act that may continue throughout a lifetime. For this reason, a major role that a reading teacher needs to consider is turning the classroom into a place in which learners move from reading for study to reading for themselves. Another method is elaborating on the types of knowledge that readers can gain from texts, such as vocabulary, grammar, and background knowledge; however, not all learners gain the knowledge. Narrow reading, where learners read texts on the same topic, is one possible way to build up background knowledge. The most basic difference between reading in L1 (first language) and L2 (second language) is that when a reader begins to read in their mother tongue, they invariably know a great deal of the language itself. When learning to read, the task is learning the way by which the sounds of the language are mapped out in writing. An L2 learner, however, needs to learn the language and its written form at the same time. This can create difficulties at different levels, both when the L2 learner is already literate in their L1 and when they are learning to read in their L2 only, either as a child or as an adult. Most readers can transfer some advanced skills, such as predicting, skimming, inferring, or recognizing text structure, so L2 reading class does not need to deal with these fields. However, for many learners, reading skills are not easily transferred from the first language to the second language. Another assumption is that the transfer of skills and strategies will be from L1 to L2, whereas in fact, the transfer can be opposite in direction. Another important issue that connects two languages and reading is that we may sometimes read a text in one language but discuss it in another. We may, for example, read a newspaper article in one language and summarize it for someone who does not know that language using another language. In spite of that, this part answers the reason and way that readers read for pleasure.

Firstly, pleasure is an important outcome of reading in itself, which is critical for becoming a lifelong reader and taking the experience of reading beyond the classroom. The main division of the purposes for reading is either reading for information or reading for pleasure. The line is more blurred than we think, sometimes the former generates the latter. Pleasure, as an element of reading, is important in motivating readers. However, many researches focused too much on "the power of reading." The third type called "the pleasure of work," refers to ways in which readers regard texts as a tool to accomplish something and for practical purposes. An important element in reading for pleasure is that it is volitional: it entails the agency of the reader, which focuses on the choice of what to read. However, while looking for interesting books, some children lack strategies for reading selection behaviors. It is an important element for L2 readers where there are extensive reading programs and other reading classes as well. Another important point is how younger readers learn to enjoy reading and how their reading attitudes develop. As we all know, reading is not hard-wired, it is a learned skill and behavior, and the different sub-elements of them also need to be taught and practiced. The development of reading implies the advance of reading. Formal school education and the acquisition of letter literacy are not only a process of cultural transmission, but also a mechanism to change the physical structure of human brain and the way the brain processes oral language. The sooner they read, the smarter they

are. However, multitasking reduces the efficiency of reading, which means switching rapidly between tasks, rather than being engaged in more than one task simultaneously. Lastly, reading can influence our thinking and feeling through the subject matter and its treatment of the subject matter. As an individual experience, reading is connected with personal reading enjoyment and intellectual engagement. As a collective experience, reading can lead to connection with others, and to deeper ways of interacting, learning, and developing with others. Reading also has a social side. Children's attitudes toward reading are, to some extent, shaped by their interactions with key social agents as reading occurs within a network of social relations. The connection between reading and community is also apparent in how reading prepares the reader to be part of a community. There is wide-ranging evidence showing that readers enjoy discussing their reading with others and sharing about the content.

The last section concerns what pedagogies are used in the teaching of reading. The presence of reading in the language classroom normally happens in the form of "intensive reading," in which teachers and learners pay detailed attention to a short text. In terms of overall lesson structure, the most common format for reading lessons is a three-phase methodology consisting of a pre-reading stage, a while-reading stage, and a post-reading stage. In effect, this turns the reading lesson into a reading test conducted collectively. The idea that "successful reading" equates to "success in reading comprehension" is engrained in many of us. Reading aloud is prevalent in society in many ways. The previous content has been a call for re-balancing the use of texts in the language classroom towards a focus on meaning and away from a focus on language as an object. There is a strong reciprocal relationship between vocabulary and reading. Vocabulary knowledge is a major element in making a text accessible and comprehensible. In pedagogical terms, this equates to providing support before the learner confronts a difficulty. Narrow reading refers to shorter texts on identical or highly similar topics. "Effectiveness" is always based on theoretical principles of pedagogy, often anchored in our personal beliefs about teaching and learning, rather than on empirical evidence that one approach is superior to the other.

3. Classroom practices

Part 2 comes to the application of reading. The use of education outside the classroom (EOtC) in schools is increasing; however, there are currently few studies assessing the longer-term impacts on academic achievement ^[2]. The first part mentions several levels to think reading, including the decoding, the interpreting ability, translating marks into meanings, background knowledge, deploying different reading styles, and the capacity to relate the written word to the known world. Firstly, it translates the questions, concerns, and findings of research into practical activities. Activities show that within the interaction between decoding, which can be cultivated through extensive reading and targeted exercises, and assigning meaning to the letter string, the brain can chunk them into words. Meanwhile, background knowledge affects the prediction skill to guess what is next in the text. In the outside world, we automatically decode symbols even unconsciously. To find specific information, we can use the reading method of quick browsing. A fluent reader can seamlessly switch from one to another. When reading, we bring reading and writing knowledge, syntactic knowledge, text types, critical thinking, and cultural knowledge. The writing system of the first language is related to the field in which the brain is activated. Telling something of interest in the first language in a second language can maintain the self-esteem in the first language. The language ability of the first language is positively correlated with success in the second language. Bilingual activities allow close reading and identifying cultural differences. Regarding reading as a personal experience, it found that extensive reading is beneficial to the improvement of reading speed and comprehension skill. The enjoyment of a reading process is often related to reading fluency. Role identification, definite time and opportunity, successful thinking, and good reading teachers play a role in attracting readers to read. Re-reading is a deeper way to interact with the text and the relationship between

reading history and the development of inner life. As a collective behavior, reading is an ideal connection with others to help us belong to and contribute to the community. For example, telling stories can shape and convey community values. Collective reading also encourages and improves readers' enthusiasm. Reading teaching develops the way of interaction between reading and information, and combines with other skills to realize different functions according to varying text types, achieving the leap from reading to rewriting to creativity in language teaching. Effective reading means considering the quality of the ideal reading teacher. Reflection is an important part of a good teacher and has a positive impact on learners and even the whole team.

4. Methodological suggestions

Part 3 decodes several elements of becoming a reading teacher. To be a reading teacher, the first thing to do is to establish contact with others; the second is to communicate with learners as readers to understand the reasons for resisting reading and verify them; the third is to build reading resources. The choice of reading materials is the main part of reading pleasure. Assumptions and learners' understanding levels will affect the materials they choose to read. Fourthly, a reading teacher needs to read the evaluation strategy. Understanding problems does not always promote reading, and sometimes it distracts "deep reading." Evaluation should be a part of the learning process, and valuable reading skills and strategies should be evaluated, which should be combined with other skills.

5. Further research

In Part 4, returning to research can help reading teachers obtain accurate answers, and use them to change and improve their teaching. This part encourages reading teachers to take these research steps, which can be easily managed in class and teaching time practically. An important first step in studying the reading class is to ask the right questions. Reading teachers need to explain to the learners why the research is beneficial and aims to improve the teaching or understanding of the learners. We have suggested in the previous chapter that reading is a personal experience. For teachers, to take this into account, they need to find what readers like and allow them to choose their reading materials. On the other hand, a reading teacher is a teacher who can further motivate reading. The research questions in this section return to the previous research, and reading teachers are invited to copy them as a reader and use their own experience and lessons as their information source.

By answering questions related to reading and practicing, this book links teachers with research and promotes change. It analyzes the language process from both individual and collective perspectives. Language is regarded as both a reading process and a teaching method. This book aims to produce strategies to evaluate and stimulate reading beyond the classroom, to provide ideas and possibilities for reading educators, and to provide readers with views on the integration of reading into language and reading. The value of this book lies in the continuous circulation from theory to practice to theory to explore the influencing factors in the reading process and verify its rationality. This plays a vital role in improving reading level and inspiring readers to regard reading as a lifelong activity.

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