

Book Review

**Anderson, N.J. (2008). The practical English Language teaching: Reading.
New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies.
(182 pages, ISBN 13 978-0-07-128093-8)**

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The Practical English Language teaching: Reading is comprehensible and accessible for both novice and experienced English language teachers who wish to be enriched with new, different perspectives in teaching reading. Anderson features this reader-friendly book with individual chapters outlining current theoretical and practical approaches for teaching reading to beginning, intermediate, and advanced learners. The book is divided into five chapters. Each chapter starts with chapter goals, followed by an introduction, the main content, reflection questions, action tasks, illustration from textbooks, suggested further readings, and a list of useful websites. A glossary of terminology and examples of questionnaires on reading strategies are also provided.

To start with Chapter One, it introduces a definition of reading; identifies a culture of reading; describes the differences among bottom-up, top-down, and interactive reading; explains intensive and extensive reading, and how to integrate both into a reading curriculum; identifies reading strategies for readers; and describes the importance of assessment in the successful teaching of reading. This chapter does not only equip reading teachers with the basic concept and current theories underlying reading activity but also raises the awareness of teachers about the implications of reading instruction.

Chapter Two is Reading for Beginning Level Learners. Attention has been drawn at the beginning of the chapter to the fact that “Beginning refers to a

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level of language proficiency and not a beginning reader.” (p. 19). That means the target learners are those who “have received minimal instruction in English and have some reading ability but are still at a beginning level of English language proficiency.” (p. 19). The major sections in this chapter, thus, address design issues, strategy-to-skill continuum, the five principles for teaching reading to beginning learners (i.e. appropriate materials; the balance of bottom-up, top-down, and interactive reading instruction; the explicit teaching of reading strategies; the focus on vocabulary development skills; and the provision of both intensive and extensive reading); reading tasks; and samples of reading materials that match the specified reading principles. Differences between teaching reading and testing reading comprehension are identified along with the supplementation of various types of assessment tools.

Chapter Three is Reading for Intermediate Level Learners. A comparison task to compare differences between a beginning level reader and an intermediate level reader is set as the starter. Then the growth in reading skills in terms of “text types” and “reading skills” is outlined to illustrate the progressive development in reading from beginning to intermediate level. The sections which follow include syllabus design issues; the learning/reading continuum; the five principles for teaching reading to intermediate learners (i.e. the intense focus on reading strategies, the effective use of dictionary, the increase of reading rate, vocabulary study through word families, and the provision of continued focus on both intensive and extensive reading instruction); the characteristics of useful reading tasks; and samples of reading materials reflecting the underlying principles. This chapter also puts forward the challenging and controversial aspects related to extensive reading or reading outside the classroom.

Chapter Four is Reading for Advanced Level Learners. Like the two previous chapters, this chapter begins with the understanding of this level of learners - proficient users of English or advanced level readers-through the descriptors defined by the Common European Framework (CEF). The progression in reading from beginning to intermediate to advanced in the aspects of different text types and reading skills development has been tabulated to show

the overall picture of “what to read” and “how to read” for each level of learners, and how the growth takes place. It is also shown along the line of learning/reading continuum that readers at the advanced level “read to learn”. This leads to the implication that teachers should provide opportunities for learners to use what they are reading with other language skills through meaningful integrated reading tasks that will encourage them to learn new information/content. Accordingly, the nature of the recommended tasks are integrated reading tasks, vocabulary learning tasks, reading strategies and tasks, and fluent reading tasks. As for reading outside the classroom or extensive reading, it is suggested that students should have a chance for more content-area reading opportunities. This can be done by encouraging students to choose a textbook they like to read and follow an assigned reading task to draw a connection between the outside reading with the skills learned in class.

The last, Chapter Five, presents key issues in teaching reading. This chapter starts with the results from the investigation of lists of priorities for teachers of reading, and then concludes with the five areas of focus involving 1) the role of reading strategies, 2) the importance of bottom-up reading skills, 3) the need for both silent and oral reading fluency, 4) the need for more extensive reading, and 5) the need for professional development for teachers of reading.

As suggested in the title Practical English Language teaching: Reading, the book has proven its practicality for reading teachers to conduct their reading lessons more effectively with the sound theoretical back-ups. Considered as a source of reference, this book serves as a highly comprehensive device for teachers of English reading skills no matter what level of learners they are teaching. The explicitly defined characteristics of each level of learners enable teachers to be aware of where a specific level of learners are on the learning/reading continuum and how this affects the design of the reading curriculum when it comes to the choice of text types and the reading skills involved. An emphasis of “stages of progress” has also been illustrated through the discussion of the related issues and the different focus of the underlying reading principles to suit the specific level of learners. Apart from showing an apparent

connection between learners and appropriate materials, the transfer of principles into various samples of reading materials and tasks adds to a deeper sense of how to put theory into practice. This transition can be taken as a ready-made guideline when selecting reading materials or preparing ones.

However, as far as the assessment is concerned, the provided guideline may be quite broad for reading teachers who are working with specific level of learners. The areas of the tests described, though informative, need to be further inferred or interpreted for real-life use.

Despite this limitation, the main content of the book and the idea of proposing reflection questions and action tasks in each chapter can be worthwhile, especially for teacher trainers or workshop supervisors who are responsible for training English teachers to teach reading skills, as those questions and tasks can function as the thought-provoking elements leading to the desired reading instruction.

Not only being perceived as a considerably self-contained version in itself, the book also provides a wide range of further readings and helpful websites as the extension for each chapter. With these references and a given set of questionnaires to survey reading strategies, it may be said that this book takes us from theory to classroom practice and beyond-to classroom research.

To summarize, this book has shed light into reading instruction by providing step-by-step guidance on teaching specific level of learners-beginning, intermediate, and advanced. It suits teacher trainees, new teachers, experienced teachers or teacher trainers. This easy-to-follow text can also benefit those interested in doing research on teaching reading and reading strategies. Aimed to be utilized as the basis for both teaching and researching, the essence of the book brings about the establishment of a motivation into a culture of reading-a strongly desired culture for our current knowledge-based society.