

BOOK REVIEW

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Hedgcock, J. S., & Ferris, D. R. (2018). *Teaching readers of English: Students, texts, and contexts*, Second Edition. New York, NY: Routledge.

Teaching readers of English: Students, texts, and contexts (2nd edition) is a highly informative book related to the teaching of reading skills to English language learners. The book was written by John Hedgcock and Dana Ferris, two of the leading authors and scholars in the field of teacher education, composition studies, writing pedagogy, and second language learning. It extensively and thoughtfully discusses general themes as well as specific concerns surrounding teaching and learning reading in the second language context. There is an obvious emphasis on the importance of reading as a critical skill for language learners. Horwitz (2008) states that in a language learning context, reading is the bridge that facilitates learning other language skills such as speaking, writing, and vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, Nation (2008) mentions that assisting language learners in the development of their reading skills is a crucial step in leading them to refine and master other language competences. Thus, this book provides a theoretical framework and practical implications and guidelines for language researchers, teachers, and learners regarding teaching English reading.

The book consists of eight chapters, all of which represent general themes that examine concepts related to how English reading is taught and learned. At the end of each chapter, the authors present practical implications and a discussion of more specific pedagogical concerns in L2 reading. The themes represented in the book are: first and second language reading, second

language readers, texts in second language reading, vocabulary learning and teaching, designing extensive reading lessons, L2 reading instruction, instructional planning for L2 reading class, and L2 reading assessment.

In the first chapter, Hedgcock and Ferris provide an extensive overview of the conceptual foundation and theories of first language (L1) and second language (L2) reading and writing literacy. This overview leads to a better understanding of the intricacies of the reading process. In other words, this overview attempts to acquaint the readers with different theoretical perspectives on the process and development patterns of L1 and L2 reading process. In the L1 and L2 context, the act of reading necessitates several complex cognitive and sociocultural processes that enable readers to communicate and deal with language messages in different written forms. The authors review L1 and L2 reading from a theoretical perspective, which helps readers have a more solid understanding of the development patterns in L1 and L2 reading.

Moreover, chapter two emphasizes the distinctive characteristics of different types of L2 reader groups, such as ESL students, immigrants, EFL students, and international students. The authors attempt to answer the questions: Who are L2 readers, and what do they know about learning how to read in English? To answer these questions, the authors review each reader group, presenting the individual differences among them and, more importantly, pointing out useful implications for teachers with reference to each group. Hedgcock and Ferris mention that it is important for teachers to understand the characteristics of L2 learners in order to meet their academic and social needs. Teachers are encouraged to discover students' background, interests, skills, and individual differences as they can inform crucial instructional and pedagogical decisions when planning courses or designing lessons. As an example, learners' individual differences and interests need to be accounted for when selecting the course text.

Furthermore, chapter three focuses on the text as an important element in the reading process. For language teachers, there are challenges that are associated with English L2 reading texts, such as text cohesion, text design, and text structure. In other words, due to linguistic and proficiency factors, many text elements (e.g., orthography, lexical items, morphemes, and complex sentences) might present challenges for L2 learners. Language teachers have to be aware of these challenges and increase the effort to choose the appropriate materials that match the learners' needs and language proficiency. According to Hedgcock and Ferris, teachers have to look carefully and analytically for the text that matches the learners' proficiency levels and their reading abilities. The importance of this chapter lays on answering many questions related to what teachers have to consider when choosing reading texts for language learners.

In the fourth chapter, the authors highlight the importance of vocabulary learning and teaching in English L2 reading instruction. Learning and teaching English L2 reading is directly related to increasing the vocabulary knowledge of language learners. Significantly, this chapter thoughtfully answers not only the questions of why language teachers should devote more time to vocabulary learning during reading instruction but also how they might do so. The authors urge L2 teachers to spend more time on teaching learner's new words because "vocabulary building and reading instruction go hand in hand" (p. 150). As such, there are many effective reading strategies that can be used to increase students' vocabulary knowledge such as inferring, guessing the meaning from context, and dictionary strategies, generating questions, definition-matching strategies.

In the fifth chapter, the authors discuss the concept of intensive reading instruction, illustrating the three stages of reading: before-reading, during-reading, and after-reading stages. Each of these stages is described in detail, allowing readers of this work to grasp key strategies

for reading instruction connected with each stage. For instance, in the before-reading phase, reading students set goals and preview the text. The during-reading phase includes skimming and scanning, making inferences, and making predictions. In the after-reading stage, the readers can summarize, analyze, and reflect on the text. For language learners, such knowledge is significant as it allows them to understand that reading is a complex process that requires them to delve into text. The chapter also provides L2 teachers with ways to apply the knowledge presented about intensive reading process into their teaching practices. For example, designing an intensive reading sequence for the three reading stages requires teachers to be aware of several factors such as the course objectives, the frequency of class meeting, the homework load expected for students, and the reading text. In the before-reading stage, students can be asked to identify what they know about the content on text to activate their background knowledge. In the during-reading stage, teachers can facilitate students' comprehension by explicitly or implicitly observing their use of reading strategies. Finally, in the after-reading stage, teachers can ask students to respond to the text and identify what they have learned from reading it.

The sixth chapter covers the benefits as well as the challenges of extensive reading in English L2 instruction. The chapter starts with a theoretical review that defines and analyzes extensive reading as a reading, teaching, and learning strategy. Unlike the intensive reading strategy, extensive reading increases the amount of text that language learners have to read. According to the authors, even though extensive reading has many benefits to students' reading skills, teachers do not incorporate this into most L2 reading courses. The use of extensive reading has many benefits, such as improving students' reading comprehension, developing their learning autonomy, enhancing their background knowledge, building students' vocabulary and grammar knowledge, and promoting more self-efficacy and motivation. However, several issues

might arise for teachers with incorporating extensive reading in L2 instruction. This includes not having enough time because of pre-existing curriculum requirements, limited resources, and resistance from students. To help teachers understand these issues, Hedgcock and Ferris present several curricular models and practical implications of extensive reading in L2 settings. Some of these implications include motivating students to engage more in extensive reading, providing consistent access to more reading materials, adding more class activities that promote extensive reading, and evaluating students' participation in extensive reading.

The seventh chapter covers the process of designing an L2 reading course. In particular, Hedgcock and Ferris detail the necessary components of designing an L2 reading course. The starting point toward designing a literacy course is needs assessment. This refers to gathering information to understand the characteristics of the targeted L2 students. This includes understanding students' demographics, literacy skills, backgrounds, learning interests, preferred learning strategies, language needs, and learning beliefs. The second step is constructing a course syllabus and outlines guided by the course objectives and the achievable learning goals. Designing a course syllabus is a process that includes several elements such as determining the course principals, identifying module or units based on the principals, sequencing these units, and identifying the language, content, and target skills. When following the syllabus, Hedgcock and Ferris emphasize the importance of balanced structure and flexibility. The third component of designing an L2 reading course is selecting an appropriate textbook and class materials. When making a decision about which textbooks or materials should be used, the teachers are encouraged to examine the pedagogical and instructional objectives, the books, and materials; find whether the literacy skills are aligned with the course objectives; and explore the materials, activities, and tasks. Significantly, designing a successful L2 reading course requires careful and

precise planning and continual revision. This chapter is devoted to increasing L2 teachers' knowledge of how an L2 reading course should be designed.

In the final chapter, the classroom L2 reading assessment was presented as one of the most important elements of teaching and learning. According to the authors, the purpose of L2 reading assessment is to evaluate not only students reading comprehension and skills but also the teaching approaches that are used in an L2 classroom. The chapter also includes a framework for designing classroom L2 reading assessment and alternative assessment tools that can be utilized by language teachers. The authors succeeded in providing an extensive overview for language teachers to be aware of the role of assessment in the teaching and learning of reading. For instance, teachers have to be aware of the importance of validity, reliability, and authenticity of the provided assessment. Also, assessment is a process that includes different components that evaluate the learners' actual abilities: diagnostic assessments, progress assessment, and achievement assessment. Diagnostic assessment refers to gathering evidence to understand what students are able or unable to do regarding their reading abilities. Progress assessment refers to examining the progress that students show during the class sequence. This type of assessment can be conducted in formal and informal ways, including quizzes, classroom activities, portfolios, projects, presentations, and classroom discussions. Achievement assessment measures the knowledge and skills that students gained throughout the unit or the course.

It is worth mentioning that there are some differences between the first and the second edition of the book in terms of the content and organization. To begin, the chapter that was dedicated to teaching literature about extensive reading was removed in the newest edition. The main points of this chapter were integrated into chapter 6, "Reading for Quantity: Extensive Reading in L2 Reading Instruction." This change decreases the number of chapters in the second

edition to 8 instead of 9 chapters. Moreover, in the second edition, the chapter sequences were reorganized. Chapter 8 “Vocabulary Learning and Teaching in L2 Reading Instruction” in the first edition was moved to chapter 4. This repositioned of the vocabulary chapter, according to Hedgcock and Ferris, allows the readers to make connections with the previous chapter about working with reading text and lead to practical implications in teaching extensive reading (chapter 5). Perhaps one of the most critical changes, in my opinion, is providing an extended and a wider look at different U.S educational policies beside Common Core State Standard. Finally, the focus on the reading-writing connection was extended to include more detail in chapter 5.

Significantly, the book is invaluable as it combines theoretical perspectives with practical implications of teaching and learning reading in a second language context. It is a valuable source that can benefit a wide range of audiences, including language researchers, teachers, and learners. Specifically, the book allows language researchers to review the conceptual frameworks related to English reading, teaching, and learning. Pre and in-service ESL/EFL language teachers can also use the book as a practical resource for use when teaching English reading. It provides teachers with teaching approaches, teachings materials, future reading resources, and classroom activities that can enhance their teaching practices. Moreover, with a simple sentence structure and an easy-to-follow approach, the book can help language learners understand and be aware of their own reading process. This could give them an in-depth explanation of how language can be learned. All in all, the book serves as a guide for anyone interested in theoretically and critically understanding the teaching and learning of reading in an L2 context.

Even though the book provides an extensive overview of teaching and learning L2 reading, the social factors that affect the language teaching and learning process need to be

emphasized. For instance, as a language teacher, I believe that students' culture plays a critical role in developing the language competencies of ESL/EFL learners. There is a need to understand how students' culture might affect their reading learning process. In other words, the authors could consider adding more about the effect of students' culture on developing their reading abilities.

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Waheeb Albiladi is a Ph.D. candidate in the TESOL program at the University of Arkansas. He has 8 years of experience in teaching English as a second/foreign language. His research interests include ESL/EFL pedagogy, technology in English teaching and learning, the use of social media in English teaching and learning, bilingual education, and educational leadership.

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