This semester, Spring 2007, I was teaching ELI 82 Advanced ESL Reading for the second time. Teaching an academic reading course at the same time as taking Second Language Studies 620, a course about reading research enabled me to become more aware of some of the research that can lead teachers to informed practice. By reading Dr. Hudson’s new book *Teaching Second Language Research* (2007), we learned about the results of countless research projects. Learning about the findings in these projects can help reading teachers plan their curriculum to provide exercises that are more useful for students. In addition to what I have been learning from the class readings, and hearing other students’ presentations, I also attended presentations about reading at this year’s TESOL convention in Seattle. Being exposed to these educational sources while I am also teaching a reading course has raised my awareness of many issues in the academic reading classroom. I have also benefited a great deal from helpful comments and constructive criticism from Kenton Harsch, Director of the ELI, Priscilla Faucette, the ELI Curriculum Coordinator, and the Reading Lead Teacher, Jee Hyun, a PhD student in our department.

Additional sources that have been helpful were rereading excerpts from the ELI handbook, especially those related to the reading area curriculum. It states that the main objective of the ELI courses are “to help students become more successful in their academic career.” For this reasons, there should be direct applications and links to students’ mainstream courses. I have also been reading a practical book entitled *From Reader to Reading Teacher: Issues and Strategies for second language classrooms*
(Aebersold and Field 1997) which has numerous practical tips with solid theoretical underpinnings. It also contains reflective tasks for reading teachers and excerpts from reading textbooks. One task that I was particularly interested by included an excerpt from a book teaching Spanish. The tasks started off with simple reading tasks and gradually got more challenging. Without the careful planning of the graduated tasks, if a teacher just said read this excerpt, it would be overwhelming, students would probably feel frustrated, not know what to focus on, etcetera. However, with very specific exercises defining the purpose of reading, it is indeed possible to successfully accomplish the tasks without feeling overwhelmed. I found this example particularly useful because it involved reading in a foreign language, which is also the case for our ELI students. I am studying Spanish now, so I could identify with what it might be like for students reading such materials in their L2, as they are in the classes that I teach.

Due to what I have been learning from this course and these readings and useful comments from other ELI reading teachers, I am motivated to continue to become a better reading teacher. Thankfully I will be teaching reading again next semester in the ELI, hopefully one section of ELI 82 again, as well as one section of ELI 72. The following are some points that I will try to improve on in teaching ELI 82 again next semester.

- Motivation:
At the beginning of the semester, I want to do a reading self-assessment free write to help students set their goals and objectives for this semester. I want to encourage students to be reflective, gain metacognitive awareness, and become more responsible for their own learning.
- Examine textbooks earlier in the semester?

Should I move Ch. 8 Learning from Textbooks and Textbook Analysis project to earlier in the semester? Last semester it was in week 12. I see that another ELI 82 teacher moved Ch. 8 to much earlier in the semester.

- Individual conferences:

Early in the semester, I think I should schedule brief individual conferences with the students. The purposes: to get to know them better, so they learn that they can talk to teachers and go to their office hours if they have questions/issues, etc. I asked another ELI teacher about how she did this and got some tips. I will also ask others for advice.

- 1/4 term evaluations:

A couple of weeks before the mid-term evaluations by the Center for Teaching Excellence (week 9 in spring semester), I wanted to get an idea of how students felt. So in week 7, as the end of class, I explained to students that I wanted to hear their anonymous opinions about how the class was going so far. I passed out blank half pieces of paper. I told students not to write their names on them. I told them to write something they liked, something they didn’t like, and if they had another questions. Students had five minutes at the end of class to do this. I know that is not much time, but still, it gave them a chance to say something and for me to get an idea about their thoughts. The comments I got were a briefer version of what I learned at the Mid-term evaluation (mentioned below). Hearing their feedback motivated me to want to try to make the class
more useful and interesting.

- 3/4 evaluations:
  I would also like to do a quick evaluation again 3/4 of the way through the semester.

- Evaluations:
  I did the Mid-Semester Evaluation from the Center for Teaching Excellence, which
  provided me with helpful information with areas that I can improve as a teacher. The
  main complaints the students had were:
  - ELI 72 and ELI 82 are too similar.
  - The book for ELI 82 is not very interesting because it is too similar to the one for ELI
    72.
  - When I use PowerPoint to go over book materials in class, it is not interesting for those
    who already did their homework at home.
  - Students would like more chances to apply the skills and strategies to interesting
    reading materials.
  - They want to read and discuss more current events.
- Using PowerPoint

I used PowerPoint several times at the beginning of the semester using the publisher's prepared slides of the chapter information. I think at first students thought it was interesting to use technology. But I think some students got bored with it and if they read the chapter for homework as they were supposed to do, maybe they thought it was a waste of class time since it was a review for them. It would probably be better to spend more class time APPLYING the strategies.

- Book exercises for homework

Last semester I was not always very clear about which exercises in the chapter students were supposed to do. It was problematic because in class, some students had done the work and some had not, so some would be finished and bored, while others felt rushed and didn't have time to finish in class. In attempt to remedy this, I tried to be more explicit about which book exercises students were to do for homework. I wrote the assigned chapter exercises on the board at the end of class.

- Applying the strategies from the book

Next semester, I will try to provide more opportunity for students to apply the strategies learned in the book. In the chapters, there are some assignments listed as Academic Applications. I will look through these and see if I should assign some of those for students to do for homework. Sometimes I should get students to bring in their own academic materials from other classes so that we can apply the strategies in class. Also, I
should ask the Reading Lead Teacher, Jee Hyun, and get some interesting supplementary materials. The excerpts in the book are often not very interesting for students. Providing more recent and interesting materials could increase their motivation.

Upon reading the minutes of our Curriculum Area Meeting for Reading teachers, Kenny Harsch, director of the ELI, mentioned that it has been a common complaint that in ELI 72 and 82 there should be more applications. His suggestion is giving students a reflective task such as this:

* Think about one of the texts you have read in one of your non-ELI classes. What is the purpose for your reading that text? (e.g. to prepare for a lecture? to take a quiz? to discuss viewpoints? to write a response or critique?)

* Now that you've got a good idea about the purpose for reading the text, think about the concepts (strategies) introduced in this chapter of our textbook. Would any of these concepts (strategies) help you to understand the text better, or read more efficiently? Would the concepts (strategies) need to be adjusted to fit your situation? Your reading style?

- Reading Journal:

The first semester I taught this course, we used the same form for Reading Journal three times. This semester, I revised the form so that it was different for Reading Journal 3 (see attachments).

- Reading Circle:
I need to provide students with some guidelines about how to find a topic and suggested sources.

Also, I need to annotate Reading Circle guidelines. Before students start reading, the Reading Circle leader should explain a little bit about the background to help students understand, to activate prior knowledge, and to build interest. Maybe there should be a time limit of about 10 minutes to read. Students should have some time to write their answers before they respond orally. When the leader asks questions, the leader should try to encourage all members to participate. The leader should not answer questions themselves.

- Reading Circle Vocabulary:

In addition to providing a good definition, the Reading Circle leader should provide their own original sentence for the words they chose to define. I think it would also be useful if the leader provided a simple vocabulary activity, such as matching the words and their definitions, or sentences and the words that fill in the blank. (matching or choose from word bank).

Next semester, I should include some words from the Reading Circle in the vocabulary tests. So having leaders prepares these vocabulary exercises helps students learn the vocabulary (the mental effort hypothesis) as well as provides me with materials to choose from in making the vocabulary test.

- Reading Circle Feedback forms:

Partway through the first semester when I was teaching ELI 82, I started using feedback
forms for the leader (self-reflection form) and the members to fill out (feedback form without their name) after the Reading Circle activity. Students took a few minutes to fill these out in class. I collected them, read them, and then stapled them and gave them to the group leader. I think this helps the leader learn what they did well and what areas they can improve on for the next time they prepare materials and lead the group. I think I should start doing this activity again next semester. I think it would also be useful to add in an assignment for the Reading Circle leader to write a short reflection paper about the feedback. I am debating if I should use class time for students to write feedback, as I did in the past. This takes a few minutes of class time, but is probably the most effective time to do feedback when it is fresh on everybody's minds. Another idea would be for students to fill out the form for homework. If it were typed, maybe students would be more candid since the leader would not see their handwriting. But I'm not sure how to do this anonymously on WebCT? Or have students type, print out and bring? Seems like more of a hassle than it's worth in this case.

- Groupings in Reading Circle:
In the past two semesters, students had different reading circle members each time. Sometimes we numbered off. I think it was about the middle of the semester when one student had a Reading Circle topic that I thought was rather controversial about rape. She prepared good materials, but I told her that I thought many students would feel uncomfortable discussing this topic. She told me that several of her friends wanted to be in her discussion group. On that day, I wrote the titles of the articles and group leaders' names on the board. Then I let students choose which group they wanted to be in.
Actually, I think we continued in that fashion for the rest of the semester. It usually worked out well, but one issue was that some students’ reading material topics were not very popular. Thankfully students cooperated to join groups with less popular topics so numbers worked out.

Next semester, I think I will assign students to groups and they will stay the same for several weeks. It will be important for the groupings to stay the same for several weeks because some words from the Reading Circle will be on the vocabulary test, which happens three times in the semester.

-Vocabulary tests:

Vocabulary tests will be consist of words from 1) the students' individual vocabulary logs, 2) from the Reading Circle materials of their group for that term, 3) some words from the book.

- Reading the textbook:

I will assign students to complete specific exercises from the chapter in writing for homework. I will also assign students to do the end of chapter readings and exercises. I will provide students with answers so that they can check the answers even though we will not have time to check all of them in class. Students should bring their books to class everyday because we will use it sometimes. On the days when students are doing Reading Circle, students should have their books and leave them open so that I can go around and check them to give them credit for doing their homework. I need to think about if it is possible to find time in class to discuss the end of chapter readings in class some. Since students will feel like they are doing a lot of reading, I will emphasize that in
this class there is intensive and extensive reading, and that doing these readings and exercises in combination with the assignments and practical applications should help them to become better readers and help them in their future academic careers even after this class is over. You cannot become a better reader by watching TV. It is by reading, learning about strategies, practicing applying them, developing one's vocabulary, critical thinking, etcetera that we can learn to become better readers.

- Reading the textbook: Handouts with pre-, while and post reading questions:
I think it would be very useful to prepare a handout for each chapter which asks some pre-, while, and post-reading questions. I will create the questions and post them on WebCT. Students should download the document, print it out, write their responses, and bring them to class. Having questions should help students focus their reading and provide fuel for a more student centered discussion.

- Going to the PC lab to show students WebCT
Next semester, I need to plan in the schedule a class day to go to the computer lab. I need to reserve PC lab ASAP at the beginning of the semester (as soon as I get confirmation of which classes I will be teaching). On the day in the PC lab, I want to show Ss how to use WebCT. First I should show them the basics. Then, I should provide a worksheet with a few tasks for them to do. They should submit it online to me. Check with other Reading teachers, maybe they have such an activity already?

- How to find Reading Circle materials and how to do find electronic resources
In PC lab, do worksheet activity about how to look for Reading Circle material and electronic research (check with writing teachers to make sure doesn't overlap. Schedule Library orientation by Susan Johnson. Have worksheet for students to do. Get from Munhong.


While in PC lab, I'd also like to quickly show students the New York Times learning website (or I could show in the classroom another time if I have the PC cart. On the PC cart, there's a cord to connect to the internet, if plug in the room). I'd like to show how they can turn the vocabulary function on, the word of the day, the daily news quiz, etc. Should I encourage them to read NYT 15 minutes a day? I will personally try to do this. Should I make an assignment in which reading the news is necessary?

- To WebCT or not to WebCT?

There are both advantages and disadvantages of using WebCT. A couple of the other ELI Reading teachers used WebCT this semester and told me about the advantages. I am going to learn from them how to use it and I will try it out in my ELI classes next semester. For me, I think the main advantages of using WebCT are:

+ All class documents are readily available on the website so students and teachers can access them anytime.
+ Students submit assignments on-line, so the teacher can control when to allow submission.
+ There is an electronic record of all assignments & feedback (which could be useful if a
teacher wants to do a research project in the future, if they first get IRB approval, of course.

+ To encourage students to use the feedback that I spend a lot of time giving, maybe I can incorporate making corrections, second draft as part of the assignment? I need to make sure that I find a way to give feedback on the computer so that students can see it (if I do track changes, if students don’t have the new software, can they see it?)

+ It can save paper.

+ Technology is becoming more important so it is useful for students and teachers to learn to use technology.

However, there are also some disadvantages of using WebCT:

- Some people are afraid of or don’t like computers.

- Some students may not have a computer, so it could be a hassle for them to turn things in on-line. In response to this complaint, there are computer labs in Moore Hall, in the libraries at UH, and several others on campus, so they should be able to get access to a computer.

- That means the teacher spends more time on the computer. Hopefully it is possible to avoid carpel tunnel syndrome.

- It takes some time to learn how to use WebCT. So the teacher should provide hands-on orientation in the computer lab.

- In the beginning, it may take a good deal of time for teachers to develop materials and put them on WebCT, however on the bright side, teachers can learn from other teachers. They can share template instead of reinventing the wheel. If they teach that course again,
it is easy to make revisions because once template has already been created, easy to save, modify for future use.

- Classroom management tips:

These are some suggestions that the lead teacher told me that I will try to do:

- For class activities, sometimes work alone first, then after share with a partner. Think, pair, share.

- Instructions: I need to provide very clear instructions. When I give instructions, I should speak slower and more clearly than usual. I should break things down into steps. It might be helpful to provide visual aids (written instructions on OHP, board, or paper).

- For class activities, plan better timing, give students time limit and time warnings. So on my lesson plan, I should think about timing carefully. I should have some flexibility in case some things take longer or shorter than planned. (Flexi stages). I should note down how long activities took as opposed to how long I expected. When I annotate my lesson plans, I can plan better for the future.

- Being a reflective teacher: This summer I am taking SLS 690, the teaching practicum class in Thailand. We will have to keep a reflective teaching journal as part of our course assignment. I am sure that I will learn a good deal from this and from the class. I should try to keep up the habit of keeping a reflective teaching journal next semester, too.

- When students give presentations, even when they have visual aids such as the OHP, it may often be difficult for students to understand what their classmates are
saying. I can usually distinguish what they are saying. When they are finished giving their mini-presentations, I can restate the main points, write key words on the board if necessary. After reading circle, when each group presented briefly to the class, there were very rarely any questions. I think the reasons are: 1) it was difficult to understand the presenters and 2) limited time.

- Grading:
This past semester I encountered some difficulties with two students who consistently turned in many assignments late. Since this class is Credit/No Credit, some students make the ELI classes a low priority for them. In the past two semesters, I as a teacher did not really worry about the grades very much. I assumed that everybody would pass, and assumed that students would turn in assignments in on time. I would write useful comments on the students' papers and words of encouragement, such as "very good, (Name)." A few students did not follow instructions consistently. After talking with some other Reading teachers about this issue, I have decided that next semester, I will allot points for each assignment and will grade them accordingly, e.g. 5/5 or 4/5.
For grades, I should mark it in the computer. Students should know where they stand. In fact, I think I will provide students with their own grade sheet so they can also keep track. This is a useful habit for students to do so they know how hard they need to study for their tests to get their desired grades.

- Attendance:
Since the ELI has a strict attendance policy, it is very important to keep attendance
records. (If a student misses more than 6 times in the semester, they fail). I will make more of an effort especially in the beginning of the semester to call students' names and check roll. This will also help me learn their names and faces in the beginning. I will also note down when then come in late. When students notice that I noted what time they came in, I think they will make more of an effort to be on time. In the past, of course I counted absences, but sometimes I did it by seeing who was absent when collecting papers. I will print out the names and dates, and then check off attendance by hand. I don't think it is necessary to enter absences in the computer each time, on paper should be fine.

- Clear guidelines on the syllabus:
I need to provide clear guidelines on the syllabus about policies such as submitting late work, absences, etc. Although it may take more planning in the beginning, being clear about it with students from the beginning and keeping good records can save a lot of time and energy in the long run.

- Extra Reading Circle and activities just in case:
Just in case a Reading Circle leader is absent, or forgets to or doesn't bring their material, the teacher should have extra materials prepared and up their sleeve. I can find a good example of Reading Circle materials and have adequate extra copies in case they are needed.

- Publisher's website?
I need to check out the links listed in the beginning of the student's book and see which ones work and which ones I should recommend to students. I should also check out the links at the end of each chapter to see which ones to recommend to students.

Attached Documents:
- Annotated syllabus
- Tentative Lesson plans for the first 4 weeks
- Vocabulary Log Instructions and form- note: there will be new guidelines for next semester
- Reading Circle Instructions
- Reading Journal forms 1 and 2
- Reading Circle Self-Evaluation and Feedback Form