

Reviewed work:

*Teaching and Researching Reading*. (2002). William Grabe and Fredericka L. Stoller. London: Pearson Education Longman. Pp. 291. ISBN 0-582-36995-9. £14.99 (\$21.95)

Reviewed by:  
Philip Hood  
University of Nottingham

This volume joins the respected series *Applied Linguistics in Action* edited by Candlin and Hall, which has already produced works such as *Teaching and Researching Motivation* by Zoltan Dörnyei and *Teaching and Researching Speaking* by Rebecca Hughes. It also provides a very welcome addition to the library of important works on second language (L2) reading such as Barnett's *More than Meets the Eye*, Bernhardt's *Reading Development in a Second Language*, the Carrell, Devine, and Eskey volume, *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*, and Aebersold and Field's more recent *From Reader to Reading Teacher*.

But this book is different in several ways from any which have gone before. The following extract from the General Editor's Preface is worth quoting in depth:

Questions that the books . . . ask are those familiar to all practitioners and researchers, whether very experienced or new. . .

- What does the research tell us, what doesn't it tell us, and what should it tell us about the field? . . .
- How has research been carried out and applied and what interesting research possibilities does practice raise? . . .
- What are the key researchable topics that practitioners can undertake? How can the research be turned into practical action?
- Where are the important resources that practitioners and researchers need? . . .(pp ix-x).

Clearly these aims set out to create a very rich and supportive resource for those interested in understanding what underlies successful reading and reading teaching in a foreign language. This review should therefore set out to present a view of how, and especially how *well*, the book achieves these aims.

Any book about *reading*, whether first or second language, needs to consider the different types of reading preferences its audience might hold. Some will be happiest when close-reading a dense text, which sets out arguments logically and builds knowledge in a coherent manner.

Others will prefer to digest key information and will use bullets and headers as a springboard to garner more detail. Still others will seek out graphically presented concepts and rely at least on tabulated data if no more visual presentation is available. Happily this work has addressed this at least partially, although the graphical element is not so well served.

A summarising system of *concepts*, *quotes*, *examples* and *figures* (all in boxes to stand out from the text), are used throughout the book to provide quick access to the "scanners" seeking particular themes. These are organised so that the *concepts* (20 or so through the early chapters) build theoretical knowledge (for example, "Concept 1.4 What is working memory?" and "Concept 1.8 Models of reading"), while the long *quotes* (13 in the first chapter) offer a range of views (for example from Pressley, Stanovich and Alderson) on the issues being presented. The *figures* tend to be summary boxes (e.g., in Chapter 2, of differences between first language (L1) and second language (L2) readers/reading). It is possible therefore to draw a large amount of information from the book simply by browsing, and this can be useful especially for more experienced researchers and teachers who wish to obtain a speedy overview of key theoretical issues.

Taking this analysis of variant reader approaches still further, we should consider whether this is a book which must be read in chapter order, or whether it is also possible to begin with the section which appears most relevant to the individual. An overview here would be of help. The book is divided into four major sections and the titles of these give a good insight into its scope. They are: *Understanding L2 reading* (3 chapters across 84 pages), *Exploring research in reading* (2 chapters across 54 pages), *Researching reading in the classroom* (4 chapters across 89 pages) and a short *Resources* chapter to conclude.

It would be possible for the teacher-action-researcher to focus heavily on the third section and quickly start to gain insights into potential focuses and processes. The first of the four chapters gives an introduction to the classroom researcher role, exploring general research issues and methods as well as making these specific to reading research with two fully worked examples to a previously offered template. The next three chapters each address one of three key research themes: vocabulary, fluency and rate development; strategic reading and discourse organisation; and reading instruction and student affect. Taking the second of these as an example the chapter model works like this. After a brief introduction to the processes likely to be involved, a set of general questions is followed by a set of much more concrete examples. A question such as "What is the difference between teaching reading strategies and training students to become strategic readers?" is given as an example of one too general to research while "Can I raise my students' awareness of reading strategies by explicitly modeling strategic reading behaviours while reading aloud to the class?" is offered as a more concrete topic for investigation. Nine outlined suggested action research projects then follow, each described through headers such as purpose, key question, anticipated outcome/s, primary way to collect data, data collection, data analysis, time needed, resources needed. For the question given above a strategy checklist is offered as a supporting tool as part of a two and a half page guide to researching the question.

Clearly then this is a very sound starting point to some action research and the range of questions across the three chapters is quite broad. The methodologies do not include more technically

difficult instruments such as eye-fixation measures or think aloud protocols by learners, but there is still a host of both quantitative and qualitative measures suggested.

The first two sections of the book are an invaluable starting point for newer researchers into L2 reading or for teacher-researchers who wish to probe further into the theoretical underpinning of their observations and analyses from classrooms. The first section summarises the key concepts in reading theory and looks at differences between L1 and L2 reading through a series of thirteen dilemmas, each of which is explored across a couple of pages of text with references to key research. Themes here include: reading development versus rule learning; building a large recognition vocabulary; and building motivation.

This approach is taken further in the second section where the two chapters look at research in both L1 and L2 reading through an examination of nine and ten key studies respectively. This may not have the completeness of the Bernhardt survey, but adds to it as these are mainly studies from the 1990s. Many themes make reference to the dilemmas explored in the previous chapter and therefore add to the coherence of the work if approached in a linear reading .

The Resources chapter offers lists of journals, resource books, and websites. This selection includes both reading specific, language-learning general and action-research supporting items. The bibliography, heavily weighted to works from 1990 onwards, again provides a useful update to the bibliographies contained in the works cited below. The index is a little disappointing and could benefit from being more detailed, although the glossary and index of studies do partly make up for this.

As a whole the potential of the book for different "readings" makes it a flexible and transparent resource without endangering the depth of its content. Its special value to action researchers lies in the accessibility of its overview - it may not be the complete guide, but it certainly lays out the issues which need to be taken into account if research is to be valid. In conclusion, this is a very worthwhile book in a strong series and will truly engage a wide readership of those who wish to think about second language reading issues and make an impact on the reading activity amongst learners across the globe.

For a flavour of the book, the website <http://humanities.businessminds.com/> offers some information about the series and the opportunity to download a complete version of the first chapter.

## References

Aebershold, J. A. and Field, M. L. (1997). *From reader to reading teacher*. Cambridge: CUP.

Barnett, M. A. (1989). *More than meets the eye*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bernhardt, E. B. (1991). *Reading development in a second language*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Carrell, P. L., Devine, J. and Eskey, D. E. (1988). *Interactive approaches to second language reading*. Cambridge: CUP