



Reviewed work:

New Ways in Teaching Reading, Revised. (2012). Richard R. Day (Ed.). Alexandria, VA: TESOL International Association. Pp. 352. ISBN 978183118574. \$45.95.

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What do language teachers want more than anything else? Great, easy to follow activity ideas that can be used and adapted for their classes, which are beneficial to their students. The revised edition of *New Ways in Teaching Reading*, published by TESOL, is full of such reading activities for the second and foreign language classroom. This compilation consists of 147 reading activities, exercises, and ideas which were submitted by various contributors from around the world, among them practicing teachers and scholars.

The book includes activities that vary in length, group sizes, and student involvement. Some activities take five minutes while others take as long as two hours. Most activities are for use within one class period, while there are some that span several class periods or are intended to be used throughout the duration of a course. There are activities for individuals, pairs, and groups. There are also activities that center on student-developed materials which can be motivating for students (Dörnyei, 2001). Many of the activities take little to no preparation time, something that all teachers can appreciate. They make use of many different resources including story books, newspapers, internet websites such as blogs, *Wordle* (i.e., word cloud generating website, www.wordle.net), and *LessonWriter* (i.e., online lesson generator from text, www.lessonwriter.com), brochures, dialogues, magazines, short stories, journals, and excerpts from textbooks, as it is important that students are exposed to a variety of materials. The different skills of speaking, listening, and writing are incorporated with reading in the activities.

The activities in this book are also designed for a range of proficiency levels from beginner to advanced and many of the activities can be adapted to fit different proficiency levels. They can be used for all languages as long as the necessary resources are available.

The activities are presented in a very easy-to-follow manner. For each activity the intended language proficiency level, the aims, the necessary class time, the preparation time, and the necessary resources are presented. Then follows a detailed procedure for how to complete the activity. Most activities come with caveats and options to vary the activity or adjust it to different proficiency levels. Many activities also come with a recommended booklist and some of them include sample worksheets and texts that can be used or adapted.

This book is divided into five parts: extensive reading, fluency, intensive reading, young readers, and oral reading. The rest of this book review will briefly cover each of these five parts.

The first part of this book is devoted to extensive reading (ER). Within this section are 19 activities to use for ER, including two ideas for growing and making an ER library, one activity to help students become aware of their reading habits, and one assessment idea to measure students' progress in an ER program. The activities involve summarizing stories, engaging with characters, suggesting continuations of the story, developing vocabulary logs, and creating advertisements for the books. ER activities are beneficial to teachers because they can be used to gauge if students are participating in an ER program. They also help students engage more with their reading. I have used five of the activities found in this part of the book (Tell Us About It, Interviewing a Character, Letter to a Character, Internet Ads for Favorite Books, and Later) for an ER program in Thailand and they worked very well. They helped to create excitement and resulted in genuine interaction among students. In addition, I was amazed at the creativity of my students.

The next section, on fluency activities, was added to this revised edition of *New Ways in Teaching Reading* to “reflect the importance and interest [of fluency] in the field of second language (L2) reading” (Day, 2012, p. xiii) and because fluency is now recognized as a critical component of L2 reading. The fluency part of *New Ways in Teaching Reading* consists of 16 activities. The majority of the activities in this section are focused on skimming and scanning. There are also repeated reading activities that involve reading the same text several times, designed to help with automatizing the bottom-up processes involved in reading, such as word recognition. Included in this section is an activity to help develop metalinguistic reading skills and an activity focused on vocabulary learning before reading to assist with fluent reading. I have used many of the activities in this section as well with great success.

Intensive reading (IR) is the largest part of *New Ways in Teaching Reading* and is subdivided into eight sections: prereading and prediction, comprehension, main ideas, academic reading, organization and structure, vocabulary and dictionaries, literature, and miscellaneous. According to Nation (2009), using the IR approach well involves focusing on high-frequency items in the language, emphasizing useful strategies, ignoring low frequency items, and repeating the high frequency items and strategies in many texts. The activities in this book aim to do what Nation (2009) recommends.

The focus of the first section of the intensive reading part of this book is on prereading and prediction. Prereading and predicting texts can help facilitate comprehension (Carrell 1984, 1987; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). This section is comprised of 12 activities, most of which focus on predicting what a text will be about and previewing a text before it is read to help activate background knowledge. There is an activity that focuses on transitions, one on themes, and one on prereading vocabulary development through the use of graphic organizers (webs). There is also an activity using headings and pictures to develop main ideas before reading

The comprehension section of the intensive reading part consists of 15 activities and an introduction to an online lesson plan maker (*LessonWriter*) to assist teachers in developing lesson plans. The activities in this section are aimed at helping students learn context and grammar clues, identify main ideas, increase reading speed, summarize, and develop vocabulary. There are activities in the comprehension section to acquaint students with the academic word list (AWL) (Coxhead, 2000) and to engage students in critical reading. Activities that focus on reading strategies are found in this section as well as other sections in this book. Research has shown that reading strategies are important in reading and learning a second and foreign language (Taylor, Stevens, & Asher, 2006).

Identifying the main ideas in a text is a common student learning outcome for many second and foreign language teachers. This book consists of ten activities that focus on this goal. In addition to activities that focus on main ideas this section has activities that help students identify details, differentiate the most important information from the least important information, and determine chronology. There is also an activity that will help students discover that they do not need to understand every word in the passage to understand the main ideas of a text.

English for academic purposes (EAP) is a huge subfield in English language teaching and reading holds utmost importance in EAP settings. The section on academic reading consists of 11 activities including one idea for developing an English for specific purposes course for nurses, which could be expanded to other content areas. The ten activities in this section are designed to expand the reading students do outside of class, increase student interest in culture and language through the use of journals, call attention to the differences in texts that are used among different disciplines, develop vocabulary, improve note-taking skills, and introduce students to academic journals.

The next section of intensive reading focuses on text organization and structure. Knowledge about text organization and structure has been shown to contribute positively to reading ability (Carrell, 1987). Within this section are nine activities. Through the use of these activities students work on note taking skills by developing outlines, identifying main ideas and main supporting details through blocking, understanding the main sections of an experimental research article, recognizing connections between ideas in news stories, and raising their awareness of cohesion in texts and anaphoric relations.

One of the larger sections of the intensive reading part is the section devoted to vocabulary and dictionaries. Research has “demonstrated that vocabulary is an important predictor of reading ability” (Grabe, 1991, p. 392). This section is composed of 13 activities. The section on vocabulary development includes activities that help students to recognize context and idiom, to

come up with other possibly suitable words for unknown words through the use of a reverse cloze activity, to use visual aids to increase vocabulary knowledge, to develop word recognition and decoding skills, and to encourage students to read without the aid of a dictionary. The activities for dictionary use engage students with the use of bilingual dictionaries, monolingual dictionaries, and online dictionaries. The activities involve developing skills for using a dictionary and categorizing words semantically. Research is not completely clear on the benefits of using dictionaries. However, it is important for second and foreign language students to be exposed to dictionaries and their use. In her study on dictionary use while reading, which looked at word learning through context with and without a dictionary, Knight (1994) found that “students who use a dictionary learn more than those who do not” (p. 292).

The literature section is the smallest section of this book and consists of five activities. These activities include practice in reading for comprehension and responding to literature in different ways. There are also activities to express student creativity, such as having students create an ending for an unfinished story. The activities presented are intended to help students understand that literature is cultural and therefore interpretation will be varied. One of the main proponents of incorporating literature into the second and foreign language classroom is Lazar. According to Lazar (1993), literature can be motivating and it allows access to the study of culture. In addition, literature can stimulate language acquisition, expand students’ language awareness, and help develop students’ interpretative abilities (Lazar, 1993).

The last section in intensive reading is the miscellaneous section, which includes eight activities. The activities in this section include developing strategies for taking reading tests, blogging, developing critical thinking and identity, encouraging reading through discussion about other cultures, sharing what students have read, interacting with interesting materials, distinguishing vowel sounds, using songs, reading for pleasure and having students create their own stories.

The fourth part of the book relates to young readers and consists of 18 activities. These activities focus on increasing phonological awareness, isolating sounds, vocabulary development, writing, summarizing, and visualization, which are all important for young readers just developing their language skills. Some of these activities are designed for very young learners (4-10 years old) while others are designed for slightly older young learners (10-17 years old). Some of the activities presented in this section seem a bit too complicated and time consuming for very young learners.

The last part of *New Ways in Teaching Reading* presents oral reading activities. Oral reading is a very controversial issue in the literature. Nevertheless, it is still very widely used, especially in EFL contexts. Marc Helgesen (2012) provides an introduction to this part of the book stating that “[t]he activities [in this section] are an attempt to move away from the traditional model [of oral reading], while building on the advantages that reading aloud can provide” (p. 336). Oral reading can help with “sound-spelling correspondence... [and] learning to chunk, or read in phrases and units of meaning” (Helgesen, 2012, p. 335). This section provides eight oral reading activities including practicing reading dialogues, identifying phrases and meaning units, making changes in a text and recognizing these changes when listening to a reading of a text, identifying sentence-level organization, recognizing stress patterns, and encouraging expression in oral reading.

For the most part the activities in this book are beneficial to both students and teachers. However, there are some criticisms that can be made. Some of the activities presented seem redundant. For example in the fluency section there are some activities for skimming (Check Skimming and Preview Skimming) and scanning (Reading Relay, Scanning Races, Flexible Scanning, Focused Scanning, Scanning Newspapers and Magazines, and Scan and You Shall “Find”) which have few differences among them. They are designed around the same idea, skimming or scanning (which are commonly taught strategies), but used in only slightly different ways. In addition, some activities are so well known that they are obvious to most teachers, except maybe the most novice ones. Most teachers are aware of or already use activities like the skimming, scanning, cloze, previewing, and predicting activities. Including them in this edition is a good reminder for teachers to use them, but they take up valuable space where other less common and new activities could have been included. Finally, some of the parts and sections are small (e.g. literature); it would have been useful if they could have been further developed with more activities. However, overall this book provides a valuable resource for second and foreign language teachers, especially for those whose students need to develop their reading skills. In my view, it is a must-have reference book for any language teacher whose classroom focus is on the teaching of reading.

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