

***Putting PIRLS to Use in Classrooms Across the Globe: Evidence-Based Contributions for Teaching Reading Comprehension in a Multilingual Context***  
**by Marian Bruggink, Nicole Swart, Annelies van der Lee, and Eliane Segers**

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### **Aim of the Book**

Reading comprehension is an important skill for language learners. It is a cognitive and constructive process that contributes to the understanding of a situation (Woolley, 2011). To understand how reading comprehension is taught, practiced, and developed in schools, verified data is needed for researchers to undertake a credible and trustworthy analysis. To do so, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) was established to obtain high-quality and large-scale data from schools in many countries around the globe. These data and studies are an excellent source for researchers and practitioners to better understand how reading comprehension is evolving and how it can be improved. The book *Putting PIRLS to Use in Classrooms Across the Globe: Evidence-Based Contributions for Teaching Reading Comprehension in a Multilingual Context* authored by Bruggink et al. (2022) aims at taking advantage of this valuable data to better understand and develop new strategies for teaching reading comprehension. The authors intend to launch a series of volumes, and this book is the first volume dedicated to reading comprehension.

### **Structure of the Book**

The book is divided into two main parts; the first part covers theories of reading comprehension followed by evidence-based didactic principles and practical teaching suggestions and then exploring reading comprehension skills using PIRLS. The second part delves into teaching reading comprehension in multilingual classrooms with some examples from five Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) countries, namely, Chile, Chinese Taipei, England, Georgia, and Spain.

More precisely, the first chapter of the first part examines theoretical ideas about how teachers ensure students' comprehension of written texts. This can be assured by the ability to understand a series of systematic procedures such as word identification, language comprehension, the employment of reading comprehension strategies, and reading motivation. The process of understanding a written text is not an easy task for students to achieve. To do so, it is vital for

teachers to acknowledge how readers/students construct the meaning from the text. It is important for students to be able to recognize and understand the cognitive process of identification. Additionally, the ability to integrate word meaning into sentence meaning in a mental model of a text is another strategy that students should learn. This can be done via adopting a strategy that can support and motivate students' comprehension of a text.

The second chapter highlights key principles for teaching reading comprehension. These didactic principles are concerned with reading in a meaningful and functional context, in-depth interaction with texts, explicit instruction in reading strategies, integrating reading tasks with other subjects, and monitoring factors associated with reading comprehension and differentiating instruction. The chapter provides each principle with practical examples and authentic materials. To achieve the best results of reading comprehension, all didactic principles ought to be combined with the appropriate examples.

The third chapter is dedicated to exploring skills of reading comprehension (i.e., vocabulary and background knowledge) via the use of PIRLS. This is presented by employing narrative and informative texts into four reading processes. To do so, the four reading processes, namely, retrieving information in a text, making inferences, interpreting ideas, and evaluating content, are well presented in a simple way with a combination of illustrative examples and practical materials.

The fourth chapter, the first one of the second part, explores how reading comprehension is taught to multilingual students by focusing on the role of vocabulary and the first language. Moreover, the chapter delves into other didactic principles, such as monitoring students' reading development, stimulating reading in both languages, developing students' second language lexical quality, teaching specific reading strategies, and using first language proficiency. This is a very important chapter, as it highlights the issue of dealing with multilingual students from different backgrounds and environments. This variation can affect students' language learning process and reading comprehension. The best way out of this situation is to support and motivate students to read in all available languages. Moreover, the use of students' first language helps to activate prior knowledge.

Chapter 5 is a practical section where some promising examples of reading instruction for multilingual students are presented. The good practices of these schools in reading comprehension were inspiring enough to be included in the book. These schools were selected based on their ability to successfully teach multilingual students reading comprehension. Informative examples are illustrated with rich supplementary tasks. All these successful practices from different schools in different countries prove that teaching reading comprehension is not a straightforward task but achievable if conducted properly and systematically.

## **Reviewer Commentary**

The book is the first in a series of volumes to come by the International Association of Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). This is a promising initiative by IEA for educators to develop and improve educational practices. It aims at raising awareness of the best

practices in teaching reading comprehension by combining theory with practice. The book is of great value to teachers and practitioners in language education working with multilingual students. What is unique about this book is that the data used is of high-quality, which enhances its credibility and validity. Moreover, the selected schools were from countries following the same theoretical guidelines, as all of them are part of Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Thus, the practices and ideas are applicable to other schools and produce measurable results.

The ultimate goal for students to learn reading is to understand what they read (Vaughn et al., 2024). Indeed, reading comprehension is “the sine qua non of reading” (Beck & McKeown, 1999, p.197). I recommend this book to educators and teachers, as it provides a valuable theoretical background and scientific insights on the PIRLS framework in reading comprehension. Moreover, five didactic principles for reading comprehension are presented with practical examples and tasks for the sake of guiding teachers and educators in processing the content of the text to achieve comprehension.

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## Information about the book

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