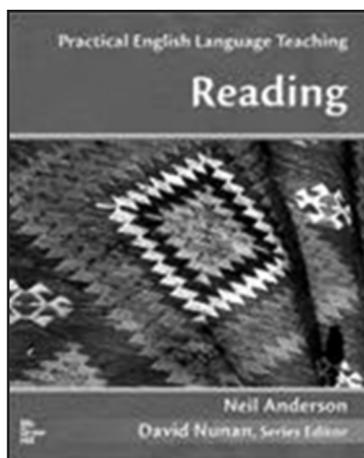


Book Review



Title	Practical English Language Teaching: Reading
Editor	David Nunan
Author	Neil J. Anderson
Publisher	McGraw Hill (2008)
No. of pages	182 pp
ISBN	9780071280938
Reviewer	Wareesiri Singhasiri

Few can deny that reading is an important language skill which the learners of L2 have to be able to master. It is regarded as a door which will lead them to acquire knowledge, and open up new worlds and opportunities. Therefore, learning to read is an important educational goal for both children and adults. According to Pang, Muaka, Bernhardt and Kamil (2003), reading is about understanding written texts. It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought. Some children and adults need additional help so that they can cope with reading difficulties that they may have. Thus, reading instruction needs to take into account different types of learners and their needs.

The back cover of the book states that ‘Practical English Language Teaching Reading’ is one in a series of special-interest books written by Neil Anderson and edited by David Nunan for teachers and teachers in preparation. This book provides important background information on how to teach reading, and vital principles and teaching strategies to teach reading for different levels.

Anderson’s book consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an orientation to reading in a second or foreign language. The chapter also introduces key principles for teaching and assessing reading. Chapters 2-4 introduce readers to the teaching of reading to beginning, intermediate, and advanced learners. Each chapter follows the same format. The key concept of these chapters is to introduce appropriate principles for teaching reading in different levels, describe and illustrate techniques and exercises, and practical techniques for assessing learners. To highlight these three chapters, I will discuss them in detail. For Chapter 2, the author has introduced the principles of teaching reading for learners at the beginning level. Four reading levels by Bett (1957) i.e. Basal, Instructional, Frustration and Capacity have been discussed and explained interestingly together with the concept of input hypothesis by Krashen (1982). The author claims

that teachers can use this idea for preparing reading materials at the appropriate pedagogical level. In Chapter 3, the idea of ‘intermediate level slump’ is introduced. It is the stage of transition from beginning level, which is ‘learning to read’, to ‘reading to learn’ level. To help the students in this level, five useful syllabus design issues are suggested on pages 60-63. Furthermore, to teach advanced learners, the four task and exercise types i.e. integrated reading tasks, vocabulary learning tasks, reading strategies and tasks, and fluent reading tasks from various textbooks are explained in the chapter. Readers may find it useful as they can use these examples as a guide when they choose tasks or textbooks for their students. Lastly, Chapter 5 summarises key issues in teaching reading. The second part of this chapter examines the top five priorities that teachers of reading should be aware of. The reader does not only have to do the exercise on page 131, but also, on pages 132-135, has the chance to read and compare his/her ideas with the ideas of the experts who have specialized in teaching and researching second language reading.

Appendixes 1-2 offer the Survey of Reading Strategies by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) and Appendix 3 suggests the forms of how learners can manage their own learning. The reader may adopt and try out these forms with their students.

This book is very suitable for both experienced and novice teachers. It claims that it will update the experienced teacher on current theoretical and practical approaches. As mentioned earlier, when the author introduces the principles of teaching, he provides concrete examples such as materials or tasks with explanations of how to use them (See pp. 33-44, 72-77, and 105-116). In addition, novice teachers will find step-by-step guidance on the practice of teaching reading as can be seen on page 60 when the author illustrates how he uses three teaching techniques to encourage students to keep on reading.

In other words, it is very reader (teacher) friendly. Readers will find the simple use of language easy to understand. The glossary is also provided with straightforward definitions. Another good point is reflection questions in every chapter which invite readers to think about critical issues in teaching reading. This is one way they can monitor if they can understand the concepts and principles in the book. The highlight of the book seems to be the last chapter which helps readers to get the gist and the critical views of teaching reading. One area that might be added is providing more reading strategy lists and scaffolding readers on how to train those strategies for learners. That might help teachers understand the process of teaching reading strategies.

Overall, this book is well-written and appropriate for the target audiences as mentioned in the foreword. It is strongly recommended for novice teachers and it also would serve as an excellent additional resource for graduate students in TESOL and EFL.

References:

- Mokhtari, K., & Sheorey, R. (2002). Measuring ESL students' awareness of reading strategies. *Journal of Development Education, 25*(3), 2-10.
- Pang, E. S., Muaka, A., Bernhardt, E. B., & Kamil, M. L. (2003). *Teaching Reading*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.