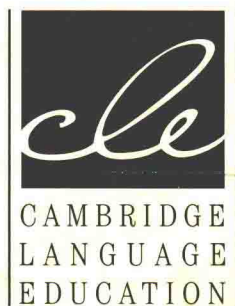


RICHARD R. DAY
JULIAN BAMFORD

EXTENSIVE READING

IN THE

SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM



SERIES EDITOR
JACK C. RICHARDS

Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom

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To the late Dr. Shigekazu Fukuyama

To Terry and Leanne Day, and Marion and
Vincent Bamford

And to Harold Palmer and Michael West, the
parents of second language extensive reading
in modern times

Series editor's preface

Although a number of useful books are available on the teaching of reading in a second or foreign language, this is the first book to focus specifically on the nature of extensive reading and the development of extensive reading programs in foreign and second language teaching. Richard Day and Julian Bamford offer an informed and practical analysis of the nature and scope of extensive reading, argue convincingly for the need to give greater attention to extensive reading in language teaching, and provide a valuable guide to developing an effective extensive reading program within a second or foreign language curriculum.

In developing their rationale for extensive reading, the authors review a comprehensive body of research that demonstrates the benefits that can accrue from extensive reading. These benefits include not only the obvious improvements in students' reading skills and reading speed but changes in their general language proficiency and in their attitudes toward reading and language learning. For many language students, the ability to engage in fluent reading and to read both for important information and for pleasure is perhaps the most valuable benefit they will gain from language study; hence it is crucial that such an outcome is planned for in language teaching rather than left to chance.

The authors demonstrate, however, that there is far more to extensive reading than simply providing materials. They analyze the factors that need to be considered in planning and implementing a program, and how such a program can be effectively organized and administered. Detailed guidance is given concerning how to integrate extensive reading into the second or foreign language curriculum, what the goals for such activities are, what resources and planning are needed, the criteria for choosing suitable reading texts, how to evaluate the program, and important factors to consider in the day-to-day management of a program.

The authors emphasize that although extensive reading is a student-centered and student-managed activity — since students choose what, when,

and how to read — teachers have a crucial role to play in ensuring the success of the program. Teachers need a thorough understanding of the nature of second language reading, of the nature of extensive reading materials, and of the strategies for developing reading skills and a love of reading through extensive reading.

Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom provides a comprehensive and stimulating account of these and other important issues in extensive reading and will be a valuable resource both for classroom teachers and for teacher educators preparing novice teachers for careers in second and foreign language teaching.

Jack C. Richards

Preface

Students are unsure of what they have read; they feel that they do not have sufficient language to say what they want to say.

“They hesitate to admit that they are not sure what they just read. They are apprehensive about being evaluated by the teacher and their peers. They elect to sit silently and wait for the teacher to ask questions or for other students to speak.

This is a description of what Jo Ann Aebersold and Mary Lee Field (1997, p. 116) call “the world of real L2/FL reading classes.” But students learning to read a second language do not have to act like that. Rather, they can be enthusiastic and confident about reading, and can leave the second language reading course as independent and lifelong readers in the target language.

This book can help make such a transformation possible. Although it is a book about the teaching and learning of reading in a second language, it differs from most books on the subject because of its focus – extensive reading. The purpose of this book is to provide a theoretical and pedagogical foundation for the premise that extensive reading should be an integral part of reading instruction in the second language classroom.

Extensive reading is an approach to the teaching and learning of second language reading in which learners read large quantities of books and other materials that are well within their linguistic competence. Extensive reading, however, is not just a matter of submerging students in a bath of print. As Albert Harris and Edward Sipay observe, “It takes superior materials, clever teachers who love to read themselves, time, and effort to develop the reading habit” (1990, p. 655).

(The benefits of such an instructional approach are wide-ranging. If set up and carried out appropriately, extensive reading not only helps students learn to read in the second language, but also leads them to enjoy reading.)

This encourages them to continue reading long after formal study of the second language is over. In addition, extensive reading, at the very least, consolidates students' learning of the second language and, at best, increases their proficiency. For all these reasons, we are firm advocates of the inclusion of extensive reading in *any* second language reading program.

Second languages are learned by different people for different reasons. Although these differences are important in some contexts, we see extensive reading (as useful to anyone who reads or intends to read a second language.) We also see extensive reading as appropriate for both a *second language* context – where the target language is learned in a community of its speakers, such as learning English in the United States – and a *foreign language* context, in which the target language is learned where that language is not spoken, such as learning English in Japan. For convenience, throughout the book we use the term *second language* to include ~~both a~~ second and a foreign language learning environment. When the term *foreign* is used, it is to refer specifically to a foreign language learning context.

An extensive reading approach does not assume that the students have any particular level of ability in the target language. In our view, extensive reading is appropriate at all stages of language learning; it is never too early – or too late – to learn to read a second language. At the same time, an extensive reading approach has nothing particular to offer the prereading stages of learning to read. Therefore, in this book it is assumed that students are already literate in their first languages and that they know the written form of the second language.

The book has three major sections. Part I provides a theoretical foundation for extensive reading. Part II is a critical examination of materials development in second language reading. Part III presents and discusses the practical aspects of conducting an extensive reading program.

Although we believe that extensive reading should be a part of every second language reading program, it is not our intention to evangelize. Rather, we present an alternative or additional way of approaching the teaching of reading. We are not so naive as to believe that an extensive reading approach can turn all students into independent, fluent readers. However, if used appropriately, an extensive reading approach can considerably improve second language reading instruction and the chances that students will enjoy reading in the second language. It would be an unusual extensive reading class that fit the description of the typical L2/FL reading class described by Aebersold and Field.

We would like to express our appreciation to Jack Richards, the editor of the series in which this book appears, for his encouragement and support; to David Hill and the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading for making

available their research in the form of the bibliography in the Appendix; to Steven Brown, Marc Helgesen, David Hill, Ted Plaister, Joyce Taniguchi, Roberta Welch, and Cambridge's anonymous reviewers for their invaluable comments on earlier drafts of the manuscript; to the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and the CILT Library in London and their staff; to Judy Davis for her work on the index; and to Mary Vaughn and Mary Carson at Cambridge University Press. We are particularly grateful to editor Olive Collen and copy editor David Thorstad for their exceptional work on the manuscript.

We hope that the ideas presented in this book will stimulate readers to reflect on their own second language reading experiences, both as teachers and as students. We also hope that readers will enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed writing it.

Richard R. Day
Julian Bamford

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PART I:

THE DIMENSIONS OF EXTENSIVE READING

This first section of the book endeavors to build a cast-iron case for broadening second language reading instruction so that it becomes more natural, more pleasant, and more effective than is often the case. Chapter 1 introduces extensive reading as an approach to the teaching of second language reading. Then Chapters 2, 3, and 4 build a case from theory and from research that extensive reading should be part of second language reading instruction. Chapter 2 does this by examining reading from a cognitive point of view; Chapter 3, by examining the affective dimensions of attitude and motivation in relation to second language reading; and Chapter 4, by reporting the results of a number of extensive reading programs. Part I concludes with suggestions in Chapter 5 for integrating extensive reading into second language reading programs.

1 An approach less taken: Extensive reading introduced

The rather curious situation has arisen whereby, despite universal acceptance of the view that one becomes a good reader through reading, reading lessons where most time is actually spent on reading (as opposed to discussion, answering questions, etc.) are relatively rare.

—Chris Moran and Eddie Williams (1993, p. 66)

The purpose of this chapter is to:

- Reexamine the purposes for second language reading instruction.
- Define extensive reading and introduce it as an approach to the teaching of second language reading.
- List the defining characteristics of successful extensive reading programs.

At the beginning of the 1950s American musical *The Music Man*, Professor Harold Hill blows into River City, Iowa, and startles the residents with the pronouncement that they have trouble. Being careful not to criticize them as parents, Professor Hill asks the good citizens of River City to think about their children: Do they dress badly when they go out? Do they use slang? Are there nicotine stains between their fingers? Do they keep sleazy novels hidden from view?

In the same rhetorical manner, we begin with a similar pronouncement: (There is trouble in the second language reading classroom. Take a moment to consider any students you know who are learning to read a second language. Are they reluctant to read? Do they seem bored or under stress? Do they come to reading class with fear and trepidation? Do they read anything in the second language apart from their assignments?) ✓

In *The Music Man*, Professor Hill was in fact a con artist who stirred up the citizenry for his own unscrupulous ends. Our intentions, on the other hand, are honorable. We raise the possibility that there may be, if not trouble, then at least two good reasons to reexamine the second language

4 *The dimensions of extensive reading*

reading classroom: In general, students learning to read a second language do not read and they do not like reading.

Students not reading and not liking to read is a problem. It is simplistic but nevertheless true that the more students read, the better they become at it. "Reading . . . must be developed, and can only be developed, by means of extensive and continual practice. People learn to read, and to read better, by reading," states David Eskey (1986, p. 21). In addition, students with negative attitudes toward second language reading are unlikely to be motivated to do the reading they need to do to become fluent readers.

In an ideal world, are there any reading teachers who would *not* want their students to (a) read a great deal and (b) enjoy reading? It is unlikely. But such aims may seem remote, unattainable, and even irrelevant to the job at hand. After all, the curriculum is filled to the brim already. Teachers' immediate priorities are making sure their students do well in their courses and pass the necessary examinations; indeed, their livelihoods depend on it. What is more, teachers already know how to achieve these immediate priorities. They rightly pride themselves on their accomplishments and abilities.

Formal education has a life of its own. (For students, it is commonly something that must be gone through, revolving around fulfilling credit requirements and passing examinations rather than the learning of something that one wants or feels a need to learn.) Pedagogical practices also have a life of their own to the extent that they become divorced from the real needs or goals of the students. Second language reading classrooms are no exception to this possibility. Carlos Yorio, in a paper titled "The ESL Reading Class: Reality or Unreality," notes that, if one is "to compare . . . classroom activities with real-life situations in which people are reading for various purposes or reasons . . . in most cases the degree of 'unreality' of the ESL reading classes is striking" (1985, p. 151).

(The second language reading lesson can avoid being merely an empty ritual — come to class, read the texts, do the exercises, leave class, return to real life — by addressing the two aims of students reading a great deal and enjoying reading. Teachers rightly feel satisfaction when students pass examinations and meet the requirements of the class. But their satisfaction would be even greater if their students also left their classes reading and enjoying the process.)

Can the two aims of reading in quantity and developing a reading habit be integrated with the immediate priorities of teacher and student without undermining successful classroom practices and methodologies? Or are such aims merely the lofty dreams of academics far removed from the classroom, the preachings of those who do not know what it is like to face