Interactive Approaches to
Second Language Reading

THE CAMBRIDGE APPLIED LINGUISTICS SERIES

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This series presents the findings of recent work in applied linguistics which are of direct relevance to language teaching and learning and of particular interest to applied linguists, researchers, language teachers, and teacher trainers.

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Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading

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To our parents

Contents

vi   *Contents*

Contents   vii

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Series editors' preface

Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading, edited by Patricia Carrell, Joanne Devine, and David Eskey, is a welcome addition to the Cambridge Applied Linguistics series. The series provides a forum for the best new work in applied linguistics by those in the field who are able to relate theory, research, and practice.

Although reading has always had a prominent position in the interests of both second language teachers and researchers in second language teaching and learning, in recent years new views of the nature of the reading process have revitalized both theory and practice in second language reading. Originating in the work of theoreticians and researchers in first language reading, these new perspectives are typically associated with those who reject views of reading as largely a process of decoding and who see it instead as an interaction of both "top-down" and "bottom-up" processes – that is, processes that utilize background knowledge and schemata and are hence concept driven, as well as those that are primarily text or data driven.

This is the position advocated in this timely collection of original and reprinted papers spanning the literature in both first language and second language reading. The interaction between top-down and bottom-up processes in second language reading is examined from the perspectives of theory, research, and instruction. The book considers different models of reading as an interactive process, clarifying the nature and role of background knowledge, topic of discourse, schemata, and inferencing. At the same time the importance of such factors as vocabulary recognition, syntactic recognition, text structure, as well as the contribution of language proficiency itself are examined. Throughout, however, the authors resist the tendency to reduce complex issues to simplistic pedagogical formulas. Rather, they outline an agenda both for further research as well as for experimentation and testing in the design of classroom materials and instructional strategies. Thus the book will be a useful reference for those interested in understanding more about the nature of second language reading, and in developing approaches to the

xii   *Series editors' preface*

teaching of second language reading that result in effective top-down
and bottom-up reading strategies in learners.

Michael H. Long
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Preface

This book had its origins at the 1984 TESOL Convention in Houston, Texas, when the three of us began collaborating on proposing, organizing, and presenting the Colloquium on Research in Reading in a Second Language. Our collaboration has continued since, not only on the continued life of the colloquium, but on other projects as well as this book. The responsibility and the effort in the production of this book have been shared jointly by all three of us.

We wish to thank the authors of the chapters which were specifically commissioned for this volume, as well as the authors of the reprinted chapters, who kindly gave us permission to incorporate their materials. We also wish to thank and acknowledge the support of our respective academic institutions (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Skidmore College, University of Southern California) for their support of our individual research as well as for their support in the production of this book.

It goes without saying that a book such as this could not have been produced without the guidance of the series' editors, Jack C. Richards and Michael H. Long, and our editors and others at Cambridge University Press. We thank all of them. Special words of thanks go to Thomas Scovel for his helpful comments and valuable suggestions in reviewing earlier drafts of this book.

Last, but not at all least, we wish to thank our spouses (Craig, Ron, and Elena) and families (Michael and Jennifer; Oliver; Megan, Jennifer, and Katherine) for their understanding and support during the several years it took to produce this book.

Patricia L. Carrell
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