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

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

the daily rigors and pressing demands of teaching? In response, we can say that the present volume derives from the experiences of teachers whose students do read and enjoy it. These are not extraordinary teachers with extraordinary students. They are ordinary people facing the same demands everyone else faces, teaching and learning in situations that range from the extreme (a wall-less secondary classroom in Zanzibar) to the conventional (a well-equipped university classroom in the United States). Our purpose in this volume, then, is to present theoretical and practical support for the premise that an extensive reading approach can be profitably integrated into any second language reading classroom.

Extensive reading

Louis Kelly, in his volume *25 Centuries of Language Teaching,* credits Harold Palmer with first applying the term *extensive reading* in foreign language pedagogy (1969, p. 131). Palmer was a pioneer of language teaching in modern times, and among his many talents was a genius for terminology. For his 1917 book *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages,* he selected "extensive" from the multitude of synonyms previously used to convey similar ideas – such as "abundant reading" used in the landmark 1900 *Report of the Committee of Twelve* (Modern Language Association of America, 1901), which suggested how languages be taught in secondary schools.

For Palmer, extensive reading meant "rapidly" (1921/1964, p. 111) reading "book after book" (1917/1968, p. 137). A reader's attention should be on the meaning, not the language, of the text. Palmer contrasted this with what he termed *intensive reading,* by which he meant to "take a text, study it line by line, referring at every moment to our dictionary and our grammar, comparing, analysing, translating, and retaining every expression that it contains" (1921/1964, p. 111). A "multiple line of approach" (p. 111) was one of Palmer's nine principles of language study, and he consequently saw the importance of both types of reading.

In Palmer's conception of extensive reading, texts were clearly being read for the purposes of language study, but, because attention was on the content and not the language, it could only be that the texts were also being read for ordinary real-world purposes of pleasure and information. And so it was that extensive reading took on a special sense in the context of language teaching: real-world reading but for a pedagogical purpose.

Other terms for extensive reading were used, even as its goals were being made explicit. Michael West, a teacher and materials writer working

in India who more than anyone else established the methodology of extensive reading, called it "supplementary" reading (1926/1955, p. 26). This was also the term used by the New York City Board of Education for its 1931 *Syllabus of Minima in Modern Foreign Languages*. Here the goal of supplementary reading was "the development to the point of enjoyment of the ability to read the foreign language" (1931/1948, p. 301), and the methodology involved "taking care of individual differences and encouraging the reading habit" (p. 302).

Today, in language-teaching terms, extensive reading is recognized as one of four styles or ways of reading, the other three being skimming, scanning, and intensive reading. Eddie Williams and Chris Moran note that these four reading styles are recognized "on the basis of observable behaviour (notably speed of reading, degree of re-reading, 'skipping' of text)" (1989, p. 222).

However, the present volume is not primarily concerned with extensive reading as a style; rather, the focus is on extensive reading as an approach to second language reading instruction.

An extensive reading approach

An extensive reading approach aims to get students reading in the second language and liking it. Or, to put things more formally, as the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* does, extensive reading is "intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading" (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992, p. 133). As this definition implies, extensive reading also pays off in increased general second language competence. Although this will occasionally be referred to, the present volume mainly restricts itself to the impact of extensive reading on the ability to read in a second language.

William Grabe, in a 1991 *TESOL Quarterly* paper, discusses some of the benefits of extensive reading. "Longer concentrated periods of silent reading build vocabulary and structural awareness, develop automaticity, enhance background knowledge, improve comprehension skills, and promote confidence and motivation" (p. 396). In addition, as Aud Marit Simensen points out (echoing Harold Palmer 60 years earlier), extensive reading can counteract "a tendency among foreign language learners always to regard a text as an object for language studies and not as an object for factual information, literary experience or simply pleasure, joy and delight" (1987, p. 42).

This last point may be more important than it at first seems. Studies of both first and second language beginning readers in many countries have revealed telling connections between reading ability and the views students hold about reading. Readers of lower ability tend to see reading in terms of "schoolwork" (Bondy, 1990, pp. 35–36) or "as a serious, difficult process, requiring hard work and disciplined effort" (Elley, 1992, p. 77). Students of higher reading ability, on the other hand, take a meaning-centered approach (Devine, 1984). For them, reading is a "pleasant, imaginative activity" (Elley, 1992, p. 77), a way to learn things that is both a private pleasure and a social activity (Bondy, 1990, pp. 36–38). It is the latter views – the kind fostered by extensive reading – that are most often associated with successful outcomes when teaching reading.

As an approach to learning to read a second language, extensive reading may be done in and out of the classroom. Outside the classroom, extensive reading is encouraged by allowing students to borrow books to take home and read. In the classroom, it requires a period of time, at least 15 minutes or so, to be set aside for *sustained silent reading,* that is, for students – and perhaps the teacher as well – to read individually anything they wish to.

Some reading specialists – Stephen Krashen and Beatrice Mikulecky come immediately to mind – call extensive reading *pleasure reading.* As he told a 1995 colloquium audience, William Grabe is not particularly keen on either term: extensive reading being rather general, and pleasure reading too specific in that "lots of people . . . get turned on to all kinds of materials that someone wouldn't put in a pile called pleasure reading. . . . Extensive reading is people willing to engage . . . [with] a lot of extended texts for a variety of reasons." There is also a possibility that "pleasure reading" has frivolous overtones for students, parents, and administrators. Perhaps for these reasons, Krashen and his colleagues have used another term, *free voluntary reading* (as in his 1993 book *The Power of Reading*).

The characteristics of an extensive reading approach

Just as it is hard to find a name for extensive reading that satisfies everyone, it is hard to reduce it to a dictionary-type definition. For teachers, a more useful way of understanding the complexity of extensive reading is though a description of the characteristics that are found in successful extensive reading programs.

1. *Students read as much as possible,* perhaps in and definitely out of the classroom.

2. *A variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available* so as to encourage reading for different reasons and in different ways.
3. *Students select what they want to read* and have the freedom to stop reading material that fails to interest them.
4. *The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.* These purposes are determined by the nature of the material and the interests of the student.
5. *Reading is its own reward.* There are few or no follow-up exercises after reading.
6. *Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students* in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Dictionaries are rarely used while reading because the constant stopping to look up words makes fluent reading difficult.
7. *Reading is individual and silent,* at the student's own pace, and, outside class, done when and where the student chooses.
8. *Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower* as students read books and other material they find easily understandable.
9. *Teachers orient students to the goals of the program, explain* the methodology, *keep track* of what each student reads, and *guide* students in getting the most out of the program.
10. *The teacher is a role model of a reader for students* – an active member of the classroom reading community, demonstrating what it means to be a reader and the rewards of being a reader.

These elements raise questions for both students and teachers alike. At workshops on extensive reading, teachers ask such questions as:

- What are the theoretical foundations of extensive reading?
- What are the benefits?
- Is there any empirical evidence for these alleged benefits?
- Do second language learners have the proper attitude toward reading to allow extensive reading?
- Are learners motivated to read outside the classroom?
- How much reading is meant by *extensive*?
- What materials are suitable for students at various ability levels in the second language?
- Are simplified materials for lower-level students inferior to authentic "real-life" materials?
- On what basis might students who read extensively be evaluated and grades be given?
- How might the success of an extensive reading program be evaluated?

Some of these issues have barely been dealt with in the professional literature, and one of the aims of this book is to remedy that deficiency.

Conclusion

Is there trouble in the second language reading classroom? Is it a problem that, as noted by Moran and Williams at the beginning of this chapter, students do not read much in reading class? Is it a problem that, as Yorio claims, reading classes bear little resemblance to the real world of reading? It is our position that these are problems and that they have a direct bearing on students' reading ability and attitude toward reading; further, that second language reading instruction can and should allow students to develop into fluent, independent, and confident second language readers; and, finally, that, to paraphrase Eva Mayne writing in 1915, reading classes can give students a love for reading in the second language, a thirst for it that will stay with them throughout their lives.

Further reading

Maxim Newmark's 1948 edited collection *Twentieth Century Modern Language Teaching: Sources and Readings* contains, along with other valuable material, excerpts from the major U.S. reports on modern language teaching from the first half of the twentieth century. If you can locate the volume itself, it is a convenient source of the even harder-to-find original documents that outlined goals and methods of second language reading instruction.

For more on Harold Palmer and Michael West, a good place to begin is A. P. R. Howatt's *A History of English Language Teaching* (1984). Chapter 16 covers Palmer's life, work, and methodology (pp. 230–244; see also pp. 325–327). "Altogether," says Howatt, "no other single individual did more to create the English language teaching profession in the present century" (p. 327). An outline of Michael West's work in India follows in Chapter 17 (pp. 245–250; see also pp. 335–336).

2 A cognitive view of reading

> To teach foreign or second language reading well, we need to know as much as possible about how the reading process works and how to integrate that knowledge effectively into our reading pedagogy.
>
> —Marva Barnett (1989, p. 1)

> There is nothing as practical as a good theory.
>
> —Anonymous

The purpose of this chapter is to:

- Examine first and second language reading as a cognitive process.
- Explain from a cognitive perspective the role of extensive reading in developing fluent second language readers.

Which of these statements best captures your view of the role of theory in the teaching of reading?

1. "To tell the truth, I really don't pay much attention to this whole theory business. I'm a teacher and I need to know what to do in class."
2. "Well, I get very confused. I hear them talking about top-down and bottom-up reading and terms like that; I don't understand it. I just teach from the books that the school orders each year."
3. "The reading course in my master's program was based on theory, so I understand the issues. But I really learned to teach reading in the practicum."
4. "It's important, no doubt about it. I mean, everything that we do has a theoretical foundation. Isn't that right?"

We have encountered versions of these four points of view about the value of theory in the teaching of reading from widely different types of reading teachers – from graduates of advanced-degree programs in English as a second language to teachers who have minimal competence in the second language and little formal training in language teaching. The position taken in this book is closer to number 4 than to any of the others. Theory is important.

When educators design second language reading programs, and when reading teachers order texts, select materials, and plan activities, assump-

tions are being made about the nature of reading, and how students learn to read a second language. These assumptions are in reality theories of reading, and it is not uncommon for them to go unexamined. If they are brought to the surface and compared to accepted theoretical models, however, serious contradictions and inconsistencies may emerge. A deeper understanding of the reading process and how students learn to read a second language can offer a stronger theoretical rationale for second language reading programs and instructional approaches.

In this chapter we set out the first of two justifications for the premise that an extensive reading approach has important benefits to offer a second language reading program. This first justification is based on the nature of reading as a cognitive process. The first half of the chapter is a consideration of cognitive interactive models of reading; the second half examines the role that extensive reading can play in developing second language students' reading ability.

Reading as a cognitive process

Reading takes many forms. Think for a moment of all the activities that can be labeled *reading.* They include serious academic reading (what you are doing now), reading the comics, scanning the television listings for your favorite program, skimming a magazine article to find out whether it merits close attention, settling into a new novel by your favorite author, reading aloud to your children, absorbing the subtitles as you watch a movie in a foreign language, and glancing at your notes as you give a speech. And this list does not begin to capture the entire spectrum of activities that can be called reading.

These varied activities that go by the name of reading can be viewed from a number of different perspectives, including sociocultural, physiological, affective, philosophical, educational, and cognitive. Although these perspectives are interrelated and interdependent (as Martin Gill points out, for example, "culture and cognition are strictly inconceivable without each other" [1992, p. 62]), there is also value in looking at each perspective individually in its own terms. An analogy might be that although a novel can be appreciated in its entirety, insights can be gained from a detailed scrutiny of the development of the main characters. The focus of this chapter is the support a cognitive perspective on the reading process offers an extensive reading approach to second language reading instruction.

Although there are many activities called *reading,* it is possible to offer a definition that most reading experts would accept as helpful in understand-