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## A Curricular Model for Reading: The Inclusion of Extensive Reading

**Neil J. Anderson**

Brigham Young University, Utah, USA

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Reading is a central part of any curriculum for language learning (Anderson, 1999, 2008, 2012b, 2014; Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Reading serves as linguistic input for learners; input they can return to over and over because the written word remains on the page. The purpose of this article is to provide second language (L2) reading teachers and curriculum developers a model of a balanced reading curriculum that includes an extensive reading (ER) component.

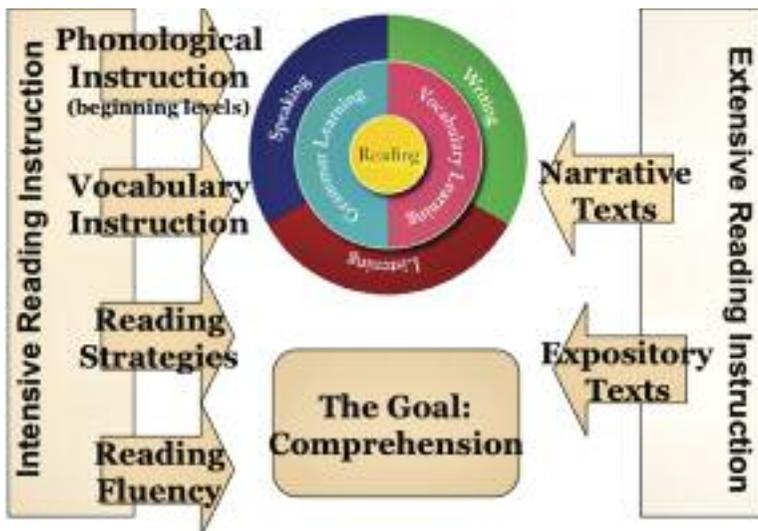
This issue of the *TESL Reporter* focuses on the topic of ER. Each of the articles provide input to teachers and curriculum coordinators to consider when making decisions on how to enhance an existing ER program or create an ER program for the first time.

This introduction provides a model of a balanced reading curriculum (Anderson, 2014) that I propose in order for teachers and curriculum coordinators to see the minimal components that should be part of a balanced reading curriculum. This model will set the stage for this special issue of the *TESL Reporter*.

### A Curricular Model

Figure 1 illustrates my proposed model. Notice at the core of the model the three concentric circles. Reading is at the core of the circles. Let me emphasize the reason that reading is at the core of this model is because reading is the focal skill for the discussion that we are engaging in now. However, if I were going to focus on the development of listening skills then the core of the curricular model would be listening. The same applies for writing, speaking, grammar learning and vocabulary learning. As we view reading at the core of the model, it is essential that we recognize that we cannot teach reading in isolation of the other language skills. There

should be explicit curricular ties between reading instruction and vocabulary learning. There should also be explicit curricular ties between reading and grammar learning. Although our primary focus in this curricular model is on the development of depth in reading skills, we also want to be assured that there are meaningful connections to the other three language skills of listening, speaking, and writing. I emphasize this because we should not just assume that as we are focusing on the development of reading skills that there will also be development in these other important aspects of language learning. The more explicit we are in the ways that we plan for the integration of language skills in a curriculum, the more likely we are to assist learners in increasing their overall language proficiency.



**Figure 1.** A Model for a Balanced Reading Curriculum

Below the concentric circles, the primary goal of reading is listed. That goal is comprehension. When readers pick up a newspaper, a magazine, a book or log in to email, they expect to understand what they are reading. In all of our efforts to teach second language learners, we should not forget that comprehension is the ultimate goal. With these two central aspects of the curricular model in mind, let me address the specific elements

that can be part of a reading curriculum. You will notice that at each end of the model, acting as bookends, are two types of reading instruction: intensive reading and extensive reading. A strong reading curriculum is going to include both of these types of instruction.

Intensive reading instruction is what happens within the classroom. During intensive reading, teachers help learners by using a variety of short texts and exercises that focus on the development of a specific reading purpose. From Figure 1 you see that I list what I consider to be four intensive reading components: phonological instruction, vocabulary instruction, reading strategies, and reading fluency. Explicit instruction in each of these elements is vital to the ultimate success of any reader. Let us consider each of these four elements of a reading curriculum.

### **Holding in the Bottom**

The first curricular element that I include in this balanced model that is often ignored during L2 intensive reading instruction is bottom-up reading strategies; phonological instruction being the primary example of bottom-up strategies. Low proficient L2 readers require support through explicit instruction in decoding skills in order to develop rapid and accurate identification of lexical and grammatical forms.

Eskey (1988) pointed out over 25 years ago that L2 reading instruction “exhibit[ed] a strongly top-down bias” (p. 95) and thus as reading teachers, we needed to do a better job of helping readers “hold in the bottom” (p. 95) by including systematic decoding instruction as part of a reading curriculum in addition to instruction on how to effectively use top-down strategies. With respect to bottom-up reading instruction over the past 25 years, the situation in L2 reading instruction has not changed significantly. More recently, Birch (2007) reemphasized the need for a balanced approach to L2 reading instruction; one that provides instruction in both bottom-up and top-down processing strategies. Every L2 reading curriculum should be looking for some type of phonics instructional component that could enhance reading instruction, particularly for lower proficient readers. Birch (2011) emphasizes the rationale for bottom-up reading instruction by stressing that “an early goal for reading instruction

is for learners to achieve efficient automatic decoding abilities, so they have enough mental attention left over for comprehension, internalization of ideas, appreciation, and relaxation” (p. 488).

### **Vocabulary Instruction**

The second curricular component of this model of reading is vocabulary instruction. Vocabulary instruction can focus on the acquisition of basic reading vocabulary as well vocabulary learning strategies.

Grabe (2009) points out that most vocabulary researchers argue that effective vocabulary learning is a combination of (a) learning words from context through extensive reading; (b) providing direct instruction of vocabulary words; (c) developing word-learning strategies; (d) building word-recognition fluency; and (e) developing word appreciation (and motivation) on students’ part. (p. 276)

When deciding what words to include in direct instruction, Gardner and Davies (2014) provide the most recent input for language teachers on specific vocabulary that language programs can consider for explicit instruction. Their new Academic Vocabulary List provides a wide frequency range of vocabulary that can be included for explicit instruction to strengthen reading skills. What sets this list apart is that it based on contemporary American English and is generated by Davies (2014) Corpus of Contemporary American English.

A recent publication by Schmitt, Jiang, and Grabe (2011) is also beneficial for reading instructors. Their research highlights that there is more to vocabulary instruction than simply knowing the meaning of a word. From their research we learn that even when learners report knowing 100% of vocabulary needed to read a text, reading comprehension scores only reach 70%. The implications of this research are significant in terms of vocabulary instruction. Just because you know the meaning of a word does not mean that you know how to integrate that word into a larger context. This helps us focus on the contexts in which words are used and the collocates that appear with words as part of vocabulary instruction.

Finally, in terms of vocabulary instruction, vocabulary learning strategies should play a central part of intensive reading instruction. The reason for such strategies is that not everyone needs to learn exactly the same vocabulary words. But if during intensive reading instruction we can provide learners with appropriate strategies, we can facilitate their independent vocabulary learning. Grabe (2009) provides suggestions for vocabulary learning strategies that include dictionary use, L1-L2 synonyms, flash cards, word-part information, mnemonics, analogies, and key-words. As we teach learners these strategies, teachers should first model the strategy so that learners see how to effectively use it. We must then provide authentic opportunities for the readers to actually use the strategy and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

### **Strategy Instruction**

The next component of effective intensive reading instruction is explicit strategy instruction.

Strategies are the conscious actions that learners take to improve their language learning. Strategies may be observable, such as observing someone take notes during an academic lecture to recall information better, or they may be mental, such as thinking about what one already knows on a topic before reading a passage in a textbook. Because strategies are conscious, there is active involvement of the L2 learner in their selection and use. Strategies are not an isolated action, but rather a process of orchestrating more than one action to accomplish a L2 task. (Anderson, 2005, p. 757)

In work that I have previously published related to strategy instruction (Anderson, 1999) I have illustrated how teachers can effectively model the use of strategies while thinking out loud while reading an appropriate text. As we model how effective readers use strategies and make strategy instruction more explicit, we engage learners' metacognitive awareness. Metacognitive awareness training should be at the core of strategy instruction. I have identified five key elements of metacognitive awareness training: (1) preparing and planning for effective learning, (2) deciding when to use particular strategies, (3) knowing how to monitor strategy use, (4)

learning to combine various strategies, and (5) evaluating the effectiveness of strategy use. (Anderson, 2012a). By blending these five aspects into explicit instruction, we will be able to help learners to be much more independent in their learning.

### **Fluency**

The final component that I suggest be part of intensive reading instruction is reading fluency. I define reading fluency as “reading at an appropriate rate with adequate comprehension” (Anderson, 2009, p. 130). Appropriate rates will depend on the age of the reader (younger readers have slower reading rates than older readers), whether the reader is reading orally or silently (we read faster when we read silently), and what our reading purpose is. Adequate comprehension also is dependent on a variety of factors. For example, if our reading purpose is to scan a text to locate a specific piece of information then the only adequate comprehension level we would accept is if we are able to name the information that we are looking for (i.e., a specific date, name, or place). The key to this definition of reading fluency is the combination of both reading rate and reading comprehension. Fluency is not one of these elements alone, but the combination of both.

I have outlined in other publications (Anderson, 1999, 2008, 2009) five different in-class instructional activities that can be applied to the classroom: (1) shadow reading, (2) rate build-up reading, (3) repeated reading, (4) class-paced reading, and (5) self-paced reading. The point that I want to emphasize here is that we cannot expect readers to improve their reading fluency by simply telling them to read faster. We must provide guided classroom practice so that learners know what to do to increase their reading fluency.

### **Maintaining a Balance**

While intensive reading instruction is the specific in-class activities that we engage in to teach students how to be stronger readers, extensive reading (ER) is the out-of-class reading opportunities where students can read longer texts and read for longer periods of time. All curricula designed

to teach L2 readers must include an extensive reading component. It is within the context of the ER component of a curriculum where learners have practice opportunities.

One key element of the practice that we must provide to learners during ER is exposure to both narrative and expository texts. Gardner (2004) provides compelling data to illustrate that the vocabulary contained in both narrative and expository texts on the same theme is different. If we want students to develop in their academic reading vocabulary, we must provide exposure to expository texts. I think that reading programs should take a balanced approach to the selection of these two text types depending on the level of language proficiency of the reader. For example, for beginning level readers, the ER program should opportunities to read 80% narrative texts and 20% expository texts. As language proficiency increases that ratio can change so that by the higher levels of proficiency readers are exposed to 80% expository materials and 20% narrative. I would advocate that there always be both types of texts included in an ER program in order for readers to be exposed to both types of reading materials.

One final element about this balanced curriculum that I would like to point out is my hope that reading programs can somehow make stronger curricular ties between the intensive reading component of the program and the extensive reading component. Students would benefit significantly if the elements of intensive reading were explicitly tied to extensive reading. One way that this could be facilitated is if all students and the teacher were reading the same texts outside of class. I recognize that this is a controversial point within the context of ER. Some advocate that the student should select the ER materials. I advocate that there should be a curricular balance with some texts selected by the teacher that all students will read together while still providing some flexibility for student selected texts.

Also, there should be explicit opportunities to practice outside of class the specific skills being taught in class. For example, if the reading strategies of making predictions and confirming/rejecting the predictions are the instructional focus during intensive reading, there should be opportunities for the readers to practice that strategy immediate outside of class during extensive reading practice. Then during the next intensive

reading instructional session there are natural opportunities to evaluate how well the strategy is working for the readers. If the instructional goal during intensive reading is the explicit teaching of specific high frequency vocabulary, it would be ideal if the teacher had already identified that vocabulary in the materials that students will read during extensive reading. Then the learners get exposure to the vocabulary within a specific context.

This model of a balanced reading curriculum outlines what I see as the essential elements that programs should be discussing to establish learning outcomes at the program level as well as at the individual class level. With this big picture in mind, we can see that ER is not just an added component to a curriculum, but rather an essential component that provides opportunities for development of the learning outcomes that programs establish.

With this big picture view in mind, this special issue of the *TESL Reporter* provides three articles that will focus on ways that programs can more specifically implement ER.

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### About the Author

*Neil J. Anderson is a Professor of Linguistics and English Language at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, USA. His research interests include second language reading, language learner strategies, learner self-assessment, motivation in language teaching and learning, and ELT leadership development. Professor Anderson is the 2014 recipient of the prestigious James Alatis Service Award to TESOL. Professor Anderson's hobbies include running, photography, and, of course, reading.*