Reviewed work:


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*Teachers Sourcebook for Extensive Reading* provides teachers with practical ideas on how to (a) find materials for extensive reading (ER), (b) implement an ER approach in a wide range of first and second language classroom settings, and (c) become advocates for ER. Although this book does not focus on ER research, the literature has shown that it can develop students’ reading and writing abilities, vocabulary knowledge, grammar, spelling, and motivation to read because students gain rich input by reading a large range of materials within their linguistic abilities (Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009; Krashen, 2004, 2011). The benefits of ER have facilitated its incorporation into many reading courses, and ER has been practiced in various ways in both first language (L1) and second language (L2) settings. As the popularity and importance of ER increase, it is useful to explore how ER can be implemented more effectively and what types of ER activities can best facilitate students’ reading in and out of class. To assist teachers in implementing ER in their classrooms, this book offers suggestions that are based on real teachers’ authentic experiences.

*Teachers Sourcebook for Extensive Reading* is composed of an introduction and three main parts, made up of nine chapters. The book’s introduction explores what ER is and why we need to do ER by connecting the concept with a student-centered approach; it also explains how this book can best be used. The authors introduce it as “a book of ideas about how to make ER work” (p. 4), with the hope that teachers will choose appropriate activities for their own specific instructional settings. The authors further explain that the book targets both L1 and L2 teachers regardless of classroom subject matter or student age group. The introduction concludes with narrative descriptions of the authors, which help readers of the book better understand from where the authors’ ideas originate.
Part I, which includes three chapters (Chapters 2–4), focuses on materials, which are an essential components of a successful ER program. In Chapter 2, the authors discuss what levels of books students should read, why self-selected reading materials can be beneficial to students, and how teachers can guide students to choose books wisely. The authors further discuss using multiple copies of the same book (e.g., class readers) and various topics and genres of books. The authors conclude the chapter by providing teachers with a list of practical tips for finding ER materials. The authors expand their discussion on finding materials in Chapter 3 by advocating—as they do elsewhere in the book—a student-centered approach and student-generated ER materials, which involve students in writing and publishing their own texts. The authors also introduce issues that can arise in relation to student-generated materials and provide possible solutions, making reference to several teachers’ experiences. Chapter 4, the last chapter in Part I, juxtaposes the use of student-generated reading materials (in Chapter 3) with those written by teachers; the authors provide rationales for using reading materials written by teachers and explain the ways in which this approach can be implemented in ER classrooms.

Part II consists of three chapters (Chapters 5–7) on how to implement ER. In Chapter 5, the authors advocate using teachers, peers, materials, rewards, and activities to motivate students to read extensively. The authors stress that teachers can serve as guides by assisting students to select the most appropriate reading materials and by planning activities that can engage students in reading. The authors emphasize that as teachers “we have to be salespeople for ER,” (p. 53) and, in that role, we can “sell” ER in various ways. Chapter 6 briefly discusses the pros and cons of post-ER activities and presents 50 possible activities that can be modified for diverse instructional contexts. In Chapter 7, the authors introduce and provide a rationale for cooperative learning in the context of ER and suggest different ways to combine cooperative reading and ER.

Part III, which introduces the concept of teachers as advocates for ER, includes two chapters. Chapter 8 reviews reasons why ER is not widely practiced and how teachers can promote its successful implementation by cooperating with other teachers. Finally, in Chapter 9, the authors suggest that teachers conduct action research on ER. While providing a rationale for such research, the authors point out that “research provides insights into many issues and difficulties that arise when we do ER. Studying anything systematically can often yield surprising insights” (p. 107). To assist teachers in their research endeavors, the authors provide teachers with nine easy-to-use steps for conducting action research and encourage teacher-researchers to work with their colleagues.

In its 118 pages, the book offers numerous practical ideas, which stem from real teacher practices that teachers can implement in their classroom settings. As the authors mention, this book provides various ways to make ER work in class. As I read the book, as an English as a second language (ESL) teacher who is trying to incorporate ER activities into my reading classes, I found myself highlighting, underlining, and writing in the margins of the book. I kept thinking about how I could adopt or adapt the activities for my own classes and my own students. Another fine feature of the book that helped me (and that can help other teachers) is the reflective questions provided throughout the book. The pre-reading and post-reading reflective questions assist readers who are teachers in raising their consciousness about the topics covered and in reflecting on the contents of each topic in relation to real-world contexts. The classroom-related anecdotes from practicing teachers that are interspersed throughout the book are a unique feature.
that brings the topic alive for readers. This book is easy to read and designed for teachers to gain insights from other teachers’ experiences.

Despite the numerous positive attributes of the book, I found several weaknesses that are worth pointing out. First, the lack of an index may cause an inconvenience to teachers when they want to find (or return to) specific ideas for implementation in their classes. Another weakness, for those readers interested in further reading on ER, is the limited number of citations to the literature throughout the book. Although this book was written as a resource book for teachers, as a student-researcher as well as a teacher, I personally would have benefitted from the inclusion of a larger number of citations to guide my own research. Similarly, teachers who are inspired by the authors’ suggestion to conduct research of their own (as advocated in Chapter 9) would benefit from references to the literature on ER. In addition to these two weaknesses, one other lingering issue was ever present while I was reading this volume: As a teacher, I was often wondering how effective some of the activities in the book would be in second versus foreign language settings. Several activities described in the book seem to be more relevant to L1 learners, especially young learners. I believe that some of the suggestions may be challenging for teachers in second and foreign language settings to employ, even though they sound viable in instructional contexts when reading them. Another element of the book that caused me some discomfort while reading it was the occasional spelling mistakes that I did not expect to find in a published book. A more careful and thorough editing of the book before publication would allow teachers to focus on the book’s content rather than be distracted by such factors. Aside from these weaknesses, I am excited by the possibilities that this book has offered me for my classes.

Overall, this book—along with other practical books on ER (e.g., Bamford & Day, 2004; Day et al., 2011)—represents a valuable new resource for teachers seeking useful ER activities that have been used successfully by practicing teachers. Teachers who want to implement ER in ways that are more dynamic by incorporating cooperative learning in their classrooms can also benefit from the various activities introduced in this book.

References


About the Reviewer

Namhee Suk is a PhD student in Applied Linguistics at Northern Arizona University. Her research interests include extensive reading, L2 reading, vocabulary and reading comprehension, motivation for L2 reading, and graded readers. She is currently conducting a study on the impact of extensive reading in a Korean EFL university setting. E-mail: ns76@nau.edu