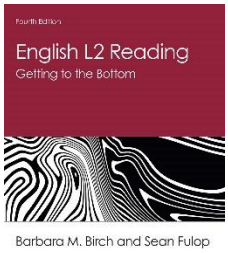
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BOOK REVIEW: ENGLISH L2 READING: GETTING TO THE BOTTOM (4TH EDITION)



Title : English L2 Reading: Getting to the Bottom (4th edition)
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Research in reading, especially the relevance of reading processing to reading instruction, has come a long way to date. From canonical individual differences research to a diversity of fine-grained examinations of domain-specific cognitive processors and their effects on reading competence, latest L2 reading research has outlined a complex and dynamic picture of reading efficacy development.

English L2 Reading: Getting to the Bottom, now in its fourth edition, has in part answered the call to reflect on the psycholinguistic turn in reading studies over decades. With its stated alignment with an emergentist view of language acquisition and purposefully modified chapter sections on metalinguistic awareness-raising in terms of instructional techniques, the revised edition still provides a bottom-up focused overview of core concepts in understanding L2 English reading mechanism, alongside practical considerations on concepts of L2 reading processing in pedagogical contexts, backed by updated research findings.

The book consists of 11 chapters elaborating different elements in reading process. Chapter 1 outlines a coordinated picture of models in reading systems: a linguistic infrastructure macro-model consisting of Working Memory (WM) linguistic strategies and Long-Term Memory (LTM) language awareness systems, and a neural network micro-model encompassing a densely interconnected network of linguistic codes. Chapter 2 discusses the universals of reading and provides an updated discussion on the characteristics of common writing systems (i.e. logographic, syllabic, alphabetic), which are used to facilitate the discussion on interlanguage reading processing in Chapter 3. The next chapter also discusses the transfer effect of L1 to L2 reading and two reading strategies (i.e. assimilation, accommodation) and one factor in transfer (orthographic distance).

The next four chapters elaborate grapheme-to-phoneme correspondence. Phonological aspects in reading are first reviewed in Chapter 4, elucidating the Simple View of reading comprehension, the emergence of phonological awareness, as well as the consonant and vowel phonemic inventory. Chapter 5 discusses letter processing via illustration of eye movements during reading comprehension. The concept of grapheme is clarified and updated charts of English graphemes are presented. Chapter 6 further reviews the English spelling system, illustrating how learners obtain spelling rules through statistical learning on morphology and spelling conventions and probabilistic reasoning with contextual and vowel support. Chapter 7 compares and contrasts two phonics methodologies for teaching such correspondences and the context where they occur.

Following three chapters provide an overview of spelling and vocabulary development in the process of language acquisition. Chapter 8 revisits the issue of morphophonemic spelling rules and L1-to-L2 transfer effect, suggesting that morphological awareness is critical for L2 reading development. Chapter 9 focuses on the spelling development among native English speakers, and examines several variables for teachers (i.e. pedagogical effectiveness, students' interests) as well as learner variables in spelling development. Chapter 10 provides an investigation into literate Linguistic Infrastructure, in which readers build up an ample L2 Linguistic Infrastructure by becoming active word learner, though under the effects of a few learner variables (e.g. WM, phonological loop or other lexical variables).

After all key components being laid down, Chapter 11 gets to the bottom of English L2 reading by highlighting the goal of reading instruction — automaticity and fluency. The reciprocal relationship between automaticity and comprehension stems from shared language processing at various levels in Linguistic Infrastructure. It also notes that reading involves multiple components closely related to WM.

As with the authors' pedagogical concerns over key notions of L2 reading processors, we find the chapter-beginning pre-reading and study guide questions and chapter-ending Language Awareness Activities and discussion questions particularly constructive and resourceful for language teachers as well as teacher educators. Such guided reflective organization is fairly in line with the new edition's highlight to develop readers' metalinguistic awareness of each sub-topic's ready implications for classroom reading instruction. Earmarked as a "Language Awareness Approach", the practical awareness-raising instructional activities acknowledge the significance of explicit description and instruction on lower-level processing in regard to teachers' awareness enhancement and their students' strategic learning optimalization (Birch & Fulop, 2020, pp. 264-265, see also Nassaji, 2003). This teaching-focused modification resonates with current TESOL research trends in equipping learners with a pool of self-regulated learning strategies (SRLS) to attain "automaticity, fluency, and comprehension" (Birch & Fulop, 2020: 265; Teng & Zhang, 2021).

Whilst explicit metalinguistic awareness and learning strategies are timely reaffirmed in this edition, we have noticed issues coincidentally mentioned but yet extensively charted. In the concluding chapter, the authors rightfully emphasize that to acquire automaticity, learners "must be active" and intended processing

strategies must perform "accurately and efficiently" at once (Birch & Fulop, 2020: 266-267). However, little elaboration was presented as to readers' active appropriation of multiple lower-level processing strategies. We thus consider it worthwhile to address how L2 learners experience and regulate the complex dynamic trajectory to achieve different levels of autonomy by drawing on state-of-the-art process-based research on learning strategy development, if a next updated edition were to be expected. Also closely correlated with the active role that readers play in the articulation of lower-level reading process is the academic consensus to data that readers can be variably motivational and emotional. We consider it necessary for a possible new edition to properly illustrate this individual difference factor via a supplementary review of research on learner motivation, self-efficacy (e.g. Graham et al., 2020), engagement (e.g. van Ammel et al., 2021), and perhaps also L1/L2 learners' emotional reactivity to content reading itself so that the book can bridge insights from both an individual-cognitive and a sociocognitive perspective (e.g. Driver, 2021).

This edition offers new conceptual resources for postgraduate TESOL students, pre-service teachers, and language acquisition researchers. The substantially revised chapter design and updated research support with new evidence-based models on reading processing provides a more practical view of central aspects of reading processors. The book is featured by its well-established and instructional guidance towards effectively supplementing top-down teaching approaches with a bottom-up perspective. We thus believe that this book can be thought-provoking for both pre-service and in-service teachers dealing with basic literacy education, and considering its pedagogical inspirations it is also especially myth-debunking for teacher trainers, curriculum designers or anyone interested in making the most of L2 English reading processing.

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