

Readings on L2 reading: Publications in other venues 2008–2009

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This feature offers an archive of articles and books published in other venues during the past year and serves as a valuable tool to readers of *Reading in a Foreign Language (RFL)*. It treats any topic within the scope of *RFL* and second language reading. The articles are listed in alphabetical order, each with a complete reference as well as a brief summary. The editors of this feature attempt to include all related articles that appear in other venues. However, undoubtedly, this list is not exhaustive.

Arikan, A. (2008). Topics of reading passages in ELT coursebooks: What do our students really read? *The Reading Matrix*, 8(2), 70–85.

In this paper Arikan presents the findings of a careful evaluation of the reading passages contained in 15 EFL textbooks. The author concludes that students' favorite topics, including cinema, sports, holidays and love, are not included in the content of the reading passages; instead, the passages most often contain the topics of housing and family, violence, crime, and the supernatural. Arikan contends that, for the good of society and to eradicate crime and violence, students should be exposed to concepts such as love and values. Furthermore, he argues that the current tendency to create textbooks first and foremost as a marketable product has led to the "McDonaldization" of reading passage topics.

Bell, J. (2008). Reading between texts: Thai postgraduate students' intertextual framing and metacognition use in reading. *The Reading Matrix*, 8(2), 39–54.

Bell investigates the intertextual framing practices used in reading by a small group of Thai postgraduate students in the first and third semesters at an Australian university, as well as the students' self awareness of these practices. She uses an ethnographic approach and incorporates individual interviews and pair think-aloud protocols in order to identify the educational and socio-cultural influences on their reading practices. She finds significant changes between first and third semesters largely due to the students' accommodation to their new cultural environment and to their program requirements.

Bruton, A. (2008). Partial lexical knowledge in tests of incidental vocabulary learning from L2 reading. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 64(1), 163–180.

This article raises the issue of categorization and scoring of multiple-choice and open responses in the study of incidental vocabulary acquisition in L2 reading. The author argues that if incidental vocabulary acquisition is subject to partial increments, partial lexical knowledge must be accounted for in research on short-term incidental vocabulary acquisition. Yet, allowing for partially correct options in multiple choice vocabulary tests changes probabilities of success and jeopardizes the validity of results. Categorizing open responses is as problematic but the author finds this type of task preferable to retrieve information on vocabulary processing. Further discussion and a consensus in the research community are then suggested.

Cabaroglu, N., & Yurdaisik, A. (2008). University instructors' views about and approaches to reading instruction and reading strategies. *The Reading Matrix*, 8(2), 133–154.

The authors investigate the opinions of and approaches to reading instruction and reading strategies of 50 preparatory school teachers in Turkey. They use a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to collect their data, and they find that those teachers who use reading strategies in their own reading are more knowledgeable in general about reading strategies and are more aware of these strategies while teaching their classes. They also observe that instructors rely more on prereading strategies than postreading strategies in the classroom; this is due to several factors including a lack of time and limited number of activities included in the textbooks.

Cheng, L., Fox, J. Y., & Zheng, Y. (2008). Student accounts of the Ontario secondary school literacy test: A case for validation. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 64(1), 69–98.

This study examines the first-hand accounts of the test-taking processes of 16 first and second language students presented immediately after completing the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). This article represents the second of a three-phase study to investigate the impact of the required exam on L2 students in comparison with their L1 peers. The investigators identify five recurring categories in the test takers' accounts of the reading and writing sections of the OSSLT: (a) varied assessments of the difficulty of the exam, (b) apparent appropriateness of the range of reading and writing tasks, (c) considerable differences in test-taking strategies, (d) tacit and profound awareness of the English language that allows L1 students to choose the answer that just “sounded right,” and (e) the degree to which the parents value education and support learning at home. Finally, they note that the L2 students seem to rely more on compensatory coping strategies while completing the test, whereas the L1 students tend to be more systematic.

Crossley, S. A., & McNamara, D. S. (2008). Assessing L2 reading texts at the intermediate level: An approximate replication of Crossley, Louwse, McCarthy, & McNamara (2007). *Language Teaching*, 41(3), 409–429.

This study compares the linguistic features of simplified and authentic texts designed for adult learners at the intermediate level. The authors replicate the Crossley et al. (2007) study by evaluating text readability with the Coh-Metrix computer program; but this time, they double their corpus and use texts at the intermediate level. Most findings from the Crossley et al. (2007) study are confirmed or nuanced: Simplified texts offer more co-referentiality and a less diverse but more ambiguous vocabulary. The reasons for and consequences of some significant

differences are also discussed. The authors address the results by making suggestions to language textbook developers to improve the simplification and selection of authentic reading materials.

Dussias, P. E., & Cramer Scaltz, T. R. (2008). Spanish-English L2 speakers' use of subcategorization bias information in the resolution of temporary ambiguity during second language reading. *Acta Psychologica, 128*(3), 501–514.

The authors use a self-paced moving window reading paradigm to examine whether the syntactic representations that proficient Spanish-English L2 speakers build during L2 sentence processing are constrained by the verb's subcategorization bias. They investigate the readers' strategic response to potential ambiguity when a noun phrase immediately following a verb can be parsed as either the direct object of the verb or as the subject of an embedded complement. Their findings indicate that the L2 processing mechanism searches for potentially useful sources of information to reduce uncertainty in the input, such as the relative frequencies of verb-subcategorization alternatives. The authors conclude that L2 readers perhaps utilize the same types of structural cues characteristic of skillful L1 reading.

Elston-Güttler, K. E., & Williams, J. N. (2008). First language polysemy affects second language meaning interpretation: Evidence for activation of first language concepts during second language reading. *Second Language Research, 24*(2), 167–187.

This study investigates the transfer of lexicalization patterns in L1 to the acquisition of vocabulary in L2, or more specifically if advanced L2 learners rely on form-meaning (word to concept) or on lexical-translation (L1 to L2) mapping. English natives and German advanced learners of English accomplished an anomaly detection task on highly and moderately related nouns and verbs that are polysemous in German. The results suggest L1 influence on L2 processing when lexicalization patterns differ between L1 and L2: The comparison of results between highly related and moderately related words, and between natives and learners, indicates that L1 interference is the result of lexical-level connections, even at high levels of acquisition.

Harvey, P. (2008). The importance of individualization in reading in a second language—part two: Some important questions related to L2 reading. *Modern English Teacher, 17*(1), 48–53.

In this second installment, Harvey resumes his discussion of his personal experience of learning to read in a second language. He addresses issues such as reading speed, strategies, personal motivation, and issues of text type and difficulty, and determines that a reasonable interest in the text is very important, as is finding time in the classroom for actual reading. For the third part of the discussion Harvey promises a summary of classroom implications for the learning and teaching of L2 reading.

Jackson, C. (2008). Proficiency level and the interaction of lexical and morphosyntactic information during L2 sentence processing. *Language Learning, 58*(4), 875–909.

This study looks at competing online processing theories. By making native and non-native German speakers process sentences that show temporarily grammatical ambiguities through

placing an initial noun in the feminine or neuter case, this study investigates whether advanced and intermediate non-native German speakers are able to process grammatical information unique to German in real time during language comprehension. Thanks to the manipulation of the thematic verb's location in the sentence, it also looks at the thematic verb's role to assign grammatical roles to noun phrases or at the preference of lexical-semantic over grammatical information at high levels of proficiency. Results show that, as proficiency increases, speakers of German do improve their ability to process morphosyntactic and lexical information during online processing but that, compared to native speakers, advanced non-native speakers of German continue to rely on lexical information to cope with temporarily ambiguous sentences.

Koda, K., & Reddy, P. (2008). Cross-linguistic transfer in second language reading. *Language Teaching, 41*(4), 497–508.

This qualitative study looks at learners' use of L1 during consciousness-raising pair activities and at the consequences of prohibiting any use of L1. 12 pairs of intermediate French and Spanish students were asked to find a grammatical rule by reading a text in French or Spanish containing the new linguistic feature. Only half of the participants were allowed to conduct their videotaped interaction in L1. The authors observed that students who were not allowed to do so still translated into L1, orally or silently, and that discussions in L1 were more balanced and productive than those in L2. Conclusions are that during language-related episodes, switching to L1 is inevitable and that prohibiting L1 may actually impede cognitive processes that enable language acquisition.

Krasny, K., & Sadoski, M. (2008). Mental imagery and affect in English/French bilingual readers: A cross-linguistic perspective. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 64*(3), 399–428.

Research has demonstrated the existence of a non-verbal system transferable from L1 to L2 and has stressed the importance of imagery and affect in global text comprehension and critical appreciation. This study aims to see whether the participants composed of 26 high school senior bilingual students enrolled in a French immersion program have achieved the necessary L2 linguistic competence necessary to create non-verbal representations from two literary stories in French and English. The similarity of students' reports of imagery and affect from L1 and L2 texts show that as learners' L2 reading competence becomes native-like, so does their ability to transfer non-verbal information.

Lazarte, A. A., & Barry, S. (2008). Syntactic complexity and L2 academic immersion effects on readers' recall and pausing strategies for English and Spanish texts. *Language Learning, 58*(4), 785–834.

This study offers new data on positive transfer from L2 to L1 reading strategies and shows how end-of-clause pauses constitute a strategy in theories on L2 literacy. Two experiments consist of an online self-paced reading of literary texts in English and Spanish manipulated to be more or less syntactically complex, and an offline recall task. The first experiment's results showed that monolingual native Spanish speakers recall more essential and nonessential information from complex texts and take longer breaks at the end of clauses than monolingual native English

speakers. A strong correlation between end-of-clause pauses and the quality of immediate recalls also exists. In the second experiment, near-native Spanish speakers whose L1 is English employed native Spanish speakers' strategies. The authors conclude that strategies learnt by reading in L2 are integrated as an alternative L1 reading strategy.

Lee, S. H. (2008). Beyond reading and proficiency assessment: The rational cloze procedure as stimulus for integrated reading, writing, and vocabulary instruction and teacher-student interaction in ESL. *System*, 36, 642–660.

The author investigates the use of the Rational Cloze Procedure (RCP) as part of a post-video activity integrating reading, writing and vocabulary acquisition and looks at students' perception of teacher-led classroom communication. To fill in the RCP, students used dictionaries, peer discussion, and peer-scoring, followed by teacher-student interaction and choral repetition. Results showed that students made significant improvements in receptive single words and lexical phrases but more gains in productive single words than lexical phrases. Students reported that their vocabulary acquisition came mainly from teacher-student interaction and found the RCP very valuable as a pre-writing and vocabulary activity.

Llinares, G., Leiva, B., Cartaya, N., & St. Louis, R. (2008). Acquisition of L2 vocabulary for effective reading: Testing teachers' classroom practice. *The Reading Matrix*, 8(2), 55–69.

The researchers employ four different approaches to help Spanish-speaking students with a low level of vocabulary knowledge acquire the minimum sight vocabulary necessary for reading English for science and technology. Their findings indicate that students make greater gains in vocabulary acquisition when trained in the use of a particular vocabulary-memorizing technique, specifically the application of a low-tech device known as Leitner's Hand Computer.

Macaro, E., & Erler, L. (2008). Raising the achievement of young-beginner readers of French through strategy instruction. *Applied Linguistics*, 29(1), 90–119.

The authors employ a longitudinal intervention study spanning 15 months. They seek to explore reading comprehension, successful use of reading strategies, and attitudes toward reading in French among Grade 7 learners of French as a foreign language in comprehensive schools in England. Their data suggest that skill-specific strategy instruction, particularly low-input but high-scaffolding over a comparatively long period of time, is valuable in L2 classrooms.

Saiegh-Haddad, E., & Geva, E. (2008). Morphological awareness, phonological awareness, and reading in English-Arabic bilingual children. *Reading and Writing*, 21(5), 481–504.

This study examines the relationships between phonological and morphological awareness and word decoding in English and Arabic and whether these skills transfer from English to Arabic in bilingual children. The results show that, in spite of typological differences, there is a significant cross-linguistic impact of phonological awareness in English L1 on Arabic L2, but no impact of morphological awareness. The authors confirm that phonological and morphological awareness improve word reading in English but add that morphological awareness in English does not predict performance on reading proficiency in Arabic. Nevertheless, in each language, the level

of complex word-reading is correlated to both phonological and morphological awareness.

Schwartz, M., Share, D. L., Leikin, M., & Kozminsky, E. (2008). On the benefits of bi-literacy: Just a head start in reading or specific orthographic insights? *Reading and Writing, 21*(9), 905–927.

In this follow-up to a previous study (2005), the authors shed new light on cross-linguistic transfer data by exploring possible explanations to their prior conclusion that early literacy in Russian (L1) facilitates decoding acquisition in Hebrew (L2) among Russian-Hebrew first graders. The results indicate that the knowledge of an orthography characterized by a fully fledged alphabet with letters representing a complex syllabic consonant and vowel structure, as compared with the primarily consonantal orthography of the target literacy language, is the mechanism of transfer of early literacy skills across alphabetic orthographies. The authors conclude that early L1 Russian literacy exposure has a positive transfer effect on the meta-linguistic development of young Russian-Hebrew bilinguals.

Scott, Virginia M., & De La Fuente, M. J. (2008). What's the problem? L2 learners' use of the L1 during consciousness-raising, form-focused tasks. *The Modern Language Journal, 92*(1), 100–113.

Research has shown that there exist language-neutral and language-specific reading skills. This review article lists 51 publications on the subject from 1957 to today by separating them into several groups: Contrastive linguistics investigated whether L1 interferes with or facilitates L2 reading acquisition; other studies tried to understand which skills are transferred from L1; others examined which language-neutral and which language-specific skills are transferred; some studies measured the relative contribution of the transfer of L1 reading skills and L2 linguistic proficiency while others analyzed the transferred L1 skills' interaction with the L2 reading input.

Shen, M. (2008). EFL learners' response to extensive reading: Survey and pedagogical applications. *The Reading Matrix, 8*(2), 111–123.

The author examines the factors ascribed to a successful extensive reading program and EFL readers' preferences regarding classroom activities for reading extensively. Shen investigates the responses of two groups of Taiwanese EFL learners, 51 students enrolled in a day program and 34 in a night program, to a three-part questionnaire and follow-up interviews regarding their personal experience with extensive reading. The selection of materials and text difficulty rank as the top two factors that influence the students' perception of their reading experience. In addition, her findings show a discrepancy between learners with different proficiency levels and learning backgrounds, namely day program and night program, and empirically support the individuality of learning.

Yamashita, J. (2008). Extensive reading and development of different aspects of L2 proficiency. *System, 36*(4), 661–673.

This study looks at the short-term benefits of extensive reading in order to offer language instructors realistic expectations for their students. The participants were 31 first-year Japanese

university students who received no exposure to English during the study but 90 minutes of extensive reading for 15 weeks. Two pretests and two posttests in the form of comprehension questions and cloze tests were performed to measure the participants' general comprehension as well as their lower-level linguistic ability. The results showed no significant improvement in micro-level linguistic ability but significant improvement in reading ability.

About the Editors

Cindy Brantmeier is an associate professor of Applied Linguistics and Spanish at Washington University in St. Louis. She is Director of the proposed Graduate Program in Applied Linguistics, Co-Director of the Graduate Certificate in Language Instruction, Director of Teacher Training, and Director of the Undergraduate Program in Applied Linguistics. She also oversees the technology-based exams for language program assessment and placement. Dr. Brantmeier has published articles concerning interacting variables in adult second language reading, language research methodology, testing and assessment, and other related areas in journals such as *The Modern Language Journal*, *System*, *Foreign Language Annals*, and *Reading in a Foreign Language* among others. She is also Editor of several volumes and a book on adult foreign language reading.

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