

## Developing a Focused Reading Lab for L2 Students

Fredericka L. Stoller

Northern Arizona University

Because of the importance of reading in today's world, L2 curricula should be devised so that at least one instructional component is dedicated to reading. In a Reading Lab setting, instructors can provide students with the guidance they need to become more fluent, independent, and confident readers. By combining sustained silent reading, teacher-guided reading instruction, systematic individualized reading, and out-of-class pleasure reading in a Reading Lab setting, students gradually move from a learning-to-read orientation to a reading-to-learn framework. This article presents a model Reading Lab design and describes the four major instructional components of the Lab as well as the logistics of running a Lab.

### INTRODUCTION

With increasing frequency, English language teaching professionals are turning to content-based and integrated-skills approaches to best meet the language and future academic needs of their second language (L2) students (e.g., Snow, Met and Genesee 1989; Mohan 1990; Snow 1991; Crandall 1993). Although a fair amount of reading and reading instruction can take place in content-based classrooms, for many academically-oriented students there is a pressing need for additional reading instruction and practice (see Carrell 1989; Lynch and Hudson 1991 for a discussion of the close relationship between academic success and efficient reading). The incorporation of a reading lab into L2 curricula is one way to provide students with opportunities for focused reading.

In this article I shall present a rationale for a Reading Lab format and describe a model Reading Lab design that comprises four instructional components. This will be followed by a discussion of the logistics of running a Lab, with commentary on the role of placement procedures, classroom ambiance, teacher and student feedback/input, and confidence building techniques.

### RATIONALE FOR A READING LAB

A Reading Lab approach represents an effective way to focus on reading in L2 instructional settings (Stoller 1986). In a Reading Lab, reading can be addressed directly and explicitly, permitting students to practice reading as well as receive instruction in strategies which will help them become more successful readers. The Reading Lab has additional benefits:

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FREDRICKA L. STOLLER is an Assistant Professor in the TESL and Applied Linguistics programs at Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona, USA. She is also Director of the Program in Intensive English at the same university. Her research interests are in reading instruction, content-based approaches to language teaching, and innovation diffusion in ELT settings. She may be contacted at the Department of English, Northern Arizona University, PO Box 6032, Flagstaff, AZ 86011-6032.