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Understanding Advanced Second-Language Reading		
Author:	Elizabeth B. Bernhardt (2010)	
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The purpose of this book is to account for how second language readers comprehend upper-register texts such as commentaries and essays, which require profound syntactic and semantic knowledge, advanced cognitive and metacognitive skills, and even subtle pragmatic differences for fluent processing. This volume emphasizes the importance of synchronous functions of first language (L1) proficiency and second language (L2) competence for L2 reading comprehension. In this process, known as the compensatory processing, knowledge sources, including L1 literacy and L2 language knowledge, work together to compensate for any deficiencies in L2 reading. In addition, pointing out that current instructions tend to disregard the contribution of L1 literacy to L2 reading comprehension, Bernhardt suggests how L2 reading development can be best facilitated considering the interplay between L1 and L2 proficiencies.

Chapter 1 describes how the perspectives on second language reading have changed since the 19th century. As previous research on second language reading was limited to a subfield of foreign language education and mainly based on first-language research, the field did not provide insightful perspectives on the process of second language reading. Thus, the currently modified views are established on new social, cognitive, and sociocognitive dimensions and include processing perspectives.

Chapter 2 introduces preponderant thoughts on second language reading in the 1970s and 1980s. Most of the studies, affected by schema theory and psycholinguistics, focused on bottom-up and top-down processing to explain how readers process L2 texts, which does not allow an interactional approach due to the hierarchical feature. Bernhardt insists that this approach is inappropriate to account for advanced second language reading because it cannot capture the on-going interaction in the reading process. Accordingly, a new methodology is necessary: a compensatory model of L2 reading, which claims that readers tend to employ all the resources in L1 and L2 to compensate for any deficiencies in L2 reading.

Chapter 3 reviews L2 reading research based on the compensatory theory and analyzes them critically according to several divisions: background knowledge, technology, strategies, testing, intrapersonal variables, transfer, phonological processing/word recognition, instruction, vocabulary, morphosyntax, and genre/text features. Particularly, this chapter highlights the importance of automatic decoding skills for fluent word reading, such as phonological awareness and word recognition, and the transfer from the L1 to the L2 in terms of strategies, morphosyntax, and vocabulary.

Chapter 4 illustrates the three main contributors to second language reading; language knowledge, first-language literacy, and other factors, and examines how these three components are interwoven and actively assist each other to offset deficit. Furthermore, the author evaluates how researchers account for second language reading considering the interrelated factors and suggests that teachers need to encourage L2 readers to employ L1 literacy to gain a high-level understanding in L2 reading texts.

Chapter 5 elucidates why it is important to use upper-register texts to observe the dynamics within a reader in the process of L2 reading. Advanced-level texts require readers to access cultural knowledge, high-cognitive skills, as well as linguistic competence in order to construct the meaning from the texts. In addition, the writer maintains that the compensatory theory would help us understand L2 literary reading comprehension since readers engage all the existing resources including L1 and L2 in order to build their understanding.

Chapter 6 introduces how to measure readers' reading comprehension through a scoring and a rating matrix. While scoring, which makes it easy to diagnose readers' syntactic and lexical problems, seems to be a useful tool for novice teachers, rating can be a more appropriate technique for experienced practitioners who are quick to assess readers' grammatical and discourse knowledge. Also, the author explores how to teach reading effectively, specifically about highly sophisticated texts.

Chapter 7 focuses on the issues related to second language reading discussed in the current research and guides the future research within the frame of the compensatory theory. Then, the author raises new questions from previously mentioned topics, such as background knowledge, technology, strategies, testing, etc., and poses further questions on upper-register text processing and the compensatory processing of L2 reading.

On the whole, this volume offers a substantial research base and emphasizes how the compensatory theory can be adequately applied to clarify advanced second language reading procedure. It also points out the research tendency of disregarding the importance of L1

literacy in the second language reading process and continuously refers to the impact of the first language in reading comprehension. Based on extensive empirical and theoretical studies, this book successfully guides readers to understand the issues related to second language reading that have been discussed and about which directions should be studied further. In particular, this volume demonstrates its value in consistent attempts to synthesize previous studies and to draw a conclusive theory. Also, the end of the book provides a useful appendix that includes summaries of the sheer number of studies cited in this volume, in which readers can enjoy the gist of each study and appreciate it. In addition to a rich coverage of the reading research, this volume provides valuable pedagogical implications for practitioners who engage in second language reading. Although this book nicely guides readers by offering a brief summary in the beginning of each chapter, novice readers may get confused with a list of studies on controversial issues. Also, some contents of this volume seems to overlap the former book, *Reading Development in a Second Language* (Bernhardt, 1991), though this follow-up definitely extends the research fields of advanced second language reading. Edmund B. Huey (1908) stated that research was a way of bringing about a positive impact on the world; similarly, this book makes a significant contribution to the field of second language reading by paving the way for future research.

References

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