This is the fifth volume of the Teachers’ Voices series which offers first-person accounts by teachers of their involvement in collaborative classroom-based action research. This volume is the result of two related reading research projects on reading practices. The first investigates the cultural and social reading practices of adult migrants outside of the classroom. The second project follows on from the first and investigates the response of students to a clearer focus on reading within their overall program. This book contains six first-person accounts of teachers.

The teachers’ accounts are prefaced by a comprehensive background paper on changing approaches to investigating the teaching of reading from the two research coordinators. The two sections cover ethnographic and classroom studies. The first section investigates reading practices of students from Lebanon and El Salvador, as well as reading practices of Chinese-speaking students. The second section shows how students respond to a re-emphasis on reading in the classroom.

This book will be directly relevant to teachers and trainee teachers interested in exploring the nature of student reading practices and in understanding how they can respond to students’ needs in reading.

WHY SHOULD I DO ACTION RESEARCH?
WHAT TEACHERS SAY …

‘Action research leads to self-analysis, examining strengths and weaknesses — reaffirming commitment to my principles of teaching.’

‘I felt personal satisfaction once I collected the data and completed the write-up — a feeling that I had challenged myself.’
Teachers’ voices 5: A new look at reading practices

Editors: Anne Burns and Helen de Silva Joyce
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<td>AEMP</td>
<td>Advanced English for Migrants</td>
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<td>AMEP</td>
<td>Adult Migrant English Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASLPR</td>
<td>Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUSLAN</td>
<td>Australian Sign Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>CALL</td>
<td>Computer-assisted language learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGEA</td>
<td>Certificate of General Education for Adults</td>
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<td>Certificate of General Education for Adults - Hearing Impaired</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSWE</td>
<td>Certificates I, II and III in Spoken and Written English</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEETYA</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Training and Youth Affairs</td>
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<td>DIEA</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs</td>
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<td>DIMA</td>
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<td>DL</td>
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<td>ELLS</td>
<td>English Language and Literacy Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCIT</td>
<td>Gold Coast Institute of TAFE</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILC</td>
<td>Independent Learning Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMP</td>
<td>Intermediate Modular Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOTY</td>
<td>It's Over to You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCELTR</td>
<td>National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSWAMES</td>
<td>New South Wales Adult Migrant English Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Second Language Acquisition</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMH</td>
<td>Sydney Morning Herald</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOS</td>
<td>Settlement and Orientation Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Tertiary and Further Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages</td>
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Introduction and acknowledgments

This book is based on two projects which were conducted through the National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research (NCELTR) at Macquarie University as part of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) Special Project Program. The projects arose from the common interests of two groups of teachers and two researchers. The first group of teachers was interested in investigating the cultural and social reading practices of adult migrants in contexts outside the classroom. The second group was interested in how students would respond to a clearer and more systematic focus on reading within their overall language program.

Ethnographic studies

The first project, which is detailed in the reports in Section One, was motivated by a belief that while each of us had spent several years teaching or researching second language reading in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, we felt we had very limited knowledge of the daily reading practices that might be found within the families of AMEP students, both in their first language and in English. We believed that understanding more about their interests and purposes for reading and the kinds of texts read by migrant learners and their family members would enhance our knowledge about how to teach reading more effectively.

In the first project a number of questions motivated our research interests:

- What were the common everyday reading practices in family groups from different language backgrounds?
- What were the purposes for reading amongst the different groups?
- What kinds of texts did the groups select for reading?
- What positive and negative learning experiences were reported by individuals?
- What implications for classroom teaching and learning could be derived from the research?

The study was conducted by a combined team of two NCELTR researchers and three teachers from the AMEP. The students came from three different language and cultural backgrounds:

- Arabic-speaking students from Lebanon
- Chinese-speaking students from the People's Republic of China
- Spanish-speaking students from El Salvador.

These choices were based partly on current and past interest in teaching these nationality groups, experience in teaching them and, in one case (Lahoud), on the ability to interview the subjects bilingually.

The study aimed to follow recent trends in the field of 'new literacy' studies that draw on ethnographic accounts of the literacy practices of different community groups. The research team had three further, more specific, overlapping aims. The first was to develop descriptions of how students from three different cultural backgrounds use reading in their daily lives. In pursuing this aim, we also wanted to know more about how the reading practices of individuals related to and interacted with those of immediate family members.

The second aim was to investigate student perceptions of experiences of learning English in an AMEP classroom, specifically relating to reading. The descriptive accounts developed from these first two aims contributed to our third aim which was to draw out implications for the teaching of reading in AMEP classrooms.
Few current approaches to the teaching of reading in the AMEP take descriptions of student non-classroom reading practices into account. We wished to complement pedagogical strategies developed for the teaching of reading with in-depth accounts provided by AMEP students themselves of their own reading practices.

**Classroom studies**

The second project grew out of the first and was conducted the following year. The investigations into reading practices had revealed a number of perceptions which students had about reading in the classroom. They had also revealed a number of wishes which the students had voiced in relation to learning to read in English.

Students involved in the first project had revealed that often they were unaware when their AMEP teachers were focusing on the skill of reading. More generally, they found it difficult to differentiate the skill focus of the various classroom activities in which they took part. They expressed a need to have the teacher state clearly the skill focus of activities.

All the students felt that reading was an important skill and that time in class should be spent on reading. When they talked about reading in class they were concerned about their lack of vocabulary which they saw as a barrier to effective reading. They also clearly saw reading aloud as an important way to develop vocabulary and to improve their pronunciation. They felt that it was important to relate the letters to sounds.

Most of the students found it difficult to articulate their understanding of specific reading skills and strategies. The only exception to this was one student who was a teacher in her own country. She understood when her teacher explained reading strategies and could see the parallels when reading in her L1.

Those students who had a high level of literacy in their first language also expressed a need for their teachers to guide them into reading material in English. They found it daunting to go to the library and they felt that they needed someone to scaffold their gradual involvement with English language books.

The papers in the first section of this volume present a rare insight into the reading practices of students in their homes and in their social activities. These insights provide a guide to the importance of reading in the adult contexts in which AMEP students wish to operate. They also provide an insight into how these students manage the range of reading tasks they need to undertake in English.

The second study, which is detailed in the reports in Section Two, was conducted by a team of one researcher from NCELTR and three teachers from the AMEP in Queensland. The teachers in the second classroom-based project found the insights from the first project enlightening. Consequently they took the opportunity to focus on reading in a clearly stated and more systematic way in their language programs and to focus on reading for pleasure.

Two of the teachers focused on reading for pleasure using a range of ESL readers. They experimented with providing a regular time for reading each week. They were also interested in how the students responded to this focus on reading narrative texts. The other teacher took an approach which integrated reading a narrative text into other aspects of her programming.

The papers in the second section of the book show how students respond to a re-emphasis on reading in the classroom. They also provide insights into how committed teachers can respond to student needs in reading. In these papers, the teachers show how some knowledge of student needs can provide a basis for integrating reading into the language program.
We need to thank many people who made these projects so successful. In the first project students invited the teacher-researchers into their homes and introduced them to their families. The teachers took time outside of their formal hours to visit the students and to interview them at length. The teachers in the second project took the time to ask their students about their needs in reading and to develop new and different approaches in their classrooms which they are willing to share with others. Our thanks go to the students and the teachers who participated so willingly in these projects and to those people who were responsible in the various organisations for enabling the projects to proceed. These people include Dennis Mapleston in Queensland, Elizabeth Hodson in Tasmania and Anne Beaumont in South Australia.

Anne Burns and Helen de Silva Joyce
Investigating reading
Changing approaches to investigating and teaching reading
Anne Burns and Helen de Silva Joyce

Introduction
Reading is often viewed as a ‘passive’, even mysterious language skill, difficult to observe and therefore to teach. Certainly, Australian research in recent years has focused strongly on writing pedagogy in second language classrooms, which has perhaps reduced the focus on the role of reading in second language learning.

However, in terms of people’s daily literacy practices, research over the past two decades (Barton and Ivanic 1991; Baynham 1995; Heath 1983; Joyce 1992) has recognised that reading is far more pervasive than writing. It is now seen as an aspect of language that is used both for learning – reading to learn – and action – reading to do – (Baynham 1995; Heath 1983; Hood, Solomon and Burns 1996).

Research into reading as a theoretical area in its own right is relatively recent (Hood, Solomon and Burns 1996). It is only over the last 40 years or so that various theories of reading and the reading process have emerged which have influenced significantly different approaches to the teaching of both mother tongue and second reading. Studies of the reading process have influenced our thinking about how people learn to read, what skilled and unskilled readers do when they read, what psychological processes come into play in reading and what people do with their reading skills in social contexts.

Bottom-up approaches
From a skills-based perspective, reading is seen as an individualised cognitive information processing skill. It is assumed that readers proceed by decoding letters, words, clauses and sentences, building up the meaning of a text in a sequential and linear way. Reliance on context may even be seen as a compensatory strategy used only by poor readers (Nicholson 1993, Perfetti 1995). Teaching approaches developed from this perspective usually emphasise phonic skills development through exercises in sound-letter correspondence and word identification. A basis assumption is that once these decoding skills have been learned, they enable people to read any written forms presented to them in isolation from contexts of use.

Top-down approaches
Psycholinguistic views of reading (Goodman 1968, Smith 1971) also see reading as an individualised process whereby readers apply contextual knowledge above the level of the text to what they read. Readers form hypotheses as they read, using existing knowledge of the meanings, language structures and sound-symbol relationships likely to occur in a text. Readers are involved in continually predicting, sampling, confirming and correcting their hypotheses about the messages they read. Goodman (1968) synthesised this view of reading by referring to it as a psychological guessing game,
which presented reading as an active process where thought and language interact. Smith (1971) drew attention to the importance of background knowledge, the non-visual information that readers need. Teaching approaches developed from this view of reading focus on comprehension of the text and using background knowledge to predict context and meaning before the text is read.

**Interactive approaches**

Theorists advocating an interactive perspective on reading argue that bottom-up and top-down models are too simplistic and fail to explain fully what happens in reading (Rumelhart 1977, Stanovich 1980, Carrell, Devine and Eskey 1988). They suggest that both sets of skills are needed in reading and that they work interactively to produce meaning. Readers simultaneously apply knowledge of letter sound formation, vocabulary, sentence structure and semantic and background knowledge, as well as reading strategies such as skimming, scanning and guessing from context. In order to compensate for deficits in one area, readers may place greater emphasis on other areas to acquire meaning. Interactive approaches to teaching reading place emphasis on the development of language and decoding skills, as well as on making explicit to students the strategies that can be used to increase fluency in reading.

**New literacy approaches**

New literacy approaches argue that reading processes are inherently contextual and relative, and need to be understood in relation to broader cultural and social roles and purposes. In this approach, different cultural views of literacy will lead to different ways of using and interpreting written texts and, in turn, the meanings drawn from texts will depend upon the reading task and its social context. A central idea is that reading is ideological rather than autonomous (Street 1984). In other words, rather than being a neutral cognitive skill, reading is situated in contexts of history, power and culture.

Theorists who adopt a critical discourse perspective argue that any one text can have multiple ‘readings’. These multiple readings come from readers who approach a text from different viewpoints, experiences and values. Critical discourse theory has influenced the teaching of reading by placing an emphasis on the importance of readers being able to read critically (Freire 1983, Gee 1990, Kress 1989, Wallace 1992). It is seen as important for readers to understand how texts seek to ‘position’ the reader in relation to what is being written about.

From these brief descriptions, we can see that reading is increasingly viewed as a complex mix of decoding skills, cognitive processes and social experiences. Freebody and Luke (1990) capture this complexity by outlining four interconnected roles which skilled readers adopt when they engage with texts.

**Code breaker:** The reader is concerned with cracking the code. It is a matter of understanding the symbolic graphic conventions which make up the code.

**Text participant:** In this role the reader is concerned with the meanings within the text and how the text corresponds to the reader’s experiences and knowledge. This involves the way the text is constructed to make meaning including literal and figurative meanings within the text.
Text user: When adopting this role, the reader is concerned with what they will do as a result of reading the text. This involves using the text in social situations to achieve social purposes and participating in events in which the text plays a part.

Text analyst: The reader is concerned with how the text attempts to position the reader and what other viewpoints are absent from the text. This involves looking for implicit meanings, opinions, bias and either endorsing or rejecting the point of view put forward by the text.

In the first NCELTR study outlined in Section One, we wanted to understand further how these complementary reader roles might be reflected in practices in the reading lives of the students. We also wanted to broaden our view of what students bring to the task of learning to read in their second language by juxtaposing their first and second language reading practices outside the classroom with their experiences of practices inside the classroom.

Literacy as social practice

Over recent years, literacy studies has developed as a field in its own right. It has drawn on new ways of understanding literacy as a set of cultural and social practices. A series of 'new literacy' studies (Scribner and Cole 1981, Heath 1983, Street 1984, Rockhill 1987, Street 1993, Hamilton et al 1994, Saxena 1994, Barton 1994, Bhatt et al 1994, Breen 1994, Heath 1995, Prinsloo and Breier 1996, Barton and Hamilton 1998) have investigated how literacy is used in people's daily lives and what significance and value they place upon it in relation to their social goals and purposes. Several of these studies have also highlighted aspects of the cultural and social practices of people operating in multilingual settings, looking at how literacy practices and meanings in one language interact with those in another language.

The approaches taken in these studies adopt an ethnographic perspective (Hammersley 1990) in that they look at literacy as it is integrated within its context. Their basic interest is in literacy practices or what people do with literacy, but also in what values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships are involved in various literacy practices (Barton and Hamilton 1998: 6). Practices include people's own perspectives on literacy and its meaning in their daily lives. Another important aspect of ethnographic literacy studies are the daily events or activities where literacy plays a role. Literacy events are often repeated, routine activities where written texts are central. They may form a regular aspect of the activities of the family or community group.

The NCELTR ethnographic projects aimed to draw on the overall principles underpinning these studies to uncover some of the daily literacy practices and events of people from three different cultural backgrounds who were also students in AMEP classes. Our particular focus in the study was on the reading practices of the students. By gaining descriptions of what students read in their daily lives outside the classroom and how and why they read it, we hoped to gain greater insights into how reading in English could be effectively taught and supported in AMEP classrooms.

Reading practices in the classroom

The second classroom-based NCELTR project aimed to broaden current methodological assumptions about the teaching of reading to adult migrants by introducing
different texts and practices into the classroom in a systematic way. The investigation of reading practices had revealed some interesting student perspectives on learning to read in English. The students saw a close connection between reading and pronunciation and all stated that reading aloud was an important element of learning to read. They also stated a need to study texts which were not too demanding in terms of vocabulary and grammar. In addition, some students wanted an opportunity to read for pleasure as part of their English learning experiences.

These findings were discussed with the second group of teachers who decided that they would experiment with ways of introducing narrative texts into their programs by using stories which were written specifically with adult second language learners in mind. Such texts are valuable bridges into literacy strategies and practices (Day and Bamford 1998). They are edited to varying language levels and the extent of vocabulary and grammatical structures which students encounter is carefully controlled. The texts are also often supported with exercises which prompt the development of reading strategies such as prediction and guessing meaning from context.

The teachers were concerned with arranging ways for the students to hear the texts being read and of providing opportunities for the students to read aloud. They sought ways of providing students with time to explore the texts in more detail. The teachers gave students an opportunity to be more relaxed about reading. They then gathered feedback on how the students viewed the change in teaching practice and what benefits they had gained from being able to read less demanding but more engaging texts.

Conclusion

The papers in this volume present student views on reading and their responses to classroom methodologies. The findings challenge teachers to review the teaching of reading and to reassess what, for some us, are more traditional approaches to reading. There are a number of clear messages from the students which we need to heed.

It is clear that students place a lot of importance on reading aloud. They see this as a way of coming to terms with the code and sound/letter correspondences but also as a means of developing pronunciation and intonation skills. The teacher needs to consider how to integrate reading aloud into the lesson. This may involve reading all texts before students engage with them in a classroom activity or providing taped stories for students to listen to.

Another issue which arose through the research was the need to provide texts which are specifically written for ESL learners, texts which control the amount of new vocabulary and grammar which the students have to deal with. There are a number of readers now available on the market and there may be a need to modify texts which give factual information. This prompt from students challenges current thinking about the need for students to deal always with authentic texts. The important issue here is that, if teachers and writers ‘manufacture’ texts, they must be modified with a full understanding of how grammar works in particular text types. The language of the texts needs to be modified in such a way as to provide a scaffold towards authentic discourse.

The students, especially those with higher levels of education, also wanted their teachers to be guides to reading in English. These students were keen to replicate their reading practices in L1 in the new language. This requires teachers to think about a range of texts which they can make available to their students as well as introducing them to sources of texts in the community. This is an area where the local library can play an important role.
The students were often not clear about the focus of classroom activities. It seems
that activities in the classroom need to be signalled more clearly in terms of purpose
and language skill. This may simply be a matter of explicitly stating the aims of an
activity or developing a systematic program outline which enables students to see the
changing focus of different classroom procedures and tasks.

Most students stated that lack of vocabulary was the main barrier to reading texts
independently of the classroom. This indicates that the teaching of vocabulary needs
to be more systematically integrated into teaching sequences. In essence, vocabulary
building is the job of the students and they need to be given strategies for dealing with
unfamiliar vocabulary and strategies for developing vocabulary independently of the
teacher. Ironically, extensive reading across a range of different text types is the best
way for students to develop vocabulary and this again raises the issue of how teachers
provide students with materials for such extensive reading (Day and Bamford 1998).

This volume presents a range of teacher voices and student voices which stress the
need to revisit reading as a skill, as a social practice and as a focus for teaching. We
hope you find them stimulating and challenging and we would like to thank all the
teachers involved for their hard work and commitment.

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Multilingual Matters


SECTION ONE

Ethnographic studies

1. Reading practices of students from Lebanon
   Hassib Lahoud

2. The reading practices of Chinese-speaking students
   Judy Perkins

3. Reading practices of El Salvadoran students
   Kim O’Sullivan
Introduction

One of the first tasks faced by the research team was to determine the methods we would use for collecting data on reading practices. Our basic aim was a situated and ethnographic approach involving rich descriptions of the students, their families and their situations before and after arriving in Australia. This also involved describing how reading practices in both first and second language had changed and were still changing as a result of their experiences of resettlement. This section contains those descriptions.

The study cannot claim to be an ethnography in the full sense of this term, in that it was small-scale, short-term and investigated only a limited set of literacy practices. Nevertheless, its methods and approaches were ethnographic in their orientation. They aimed to explore student personal behaviours, attitudes and perspectives on reading both in their daily lives and in the classroom. Our aim was to bring to the fore student interpretations, rather than our own, although we recognise that ethnographic data inevitably becomes filtered by the processes of collection, analysis and description. In traditional ethnographic studies much use is made of participant observation. While our own observations of the students were an informal part of the study, the main sources of data were interviews. The three specific sources of data collection we used were as follows.

1. Interviews with a family from each of the three language backgrounds conducted in their own homes.
   We selected families in which three generations were represented in order to gain a sense of how reading practices and events differed across family groups and individuals.

2. Analysis of the material read in first and second language over a period of one week, through a reading diary kept by the students.

3. Follow-up interviews with other students from the same cultural and language backgrounds to gain broader perspectives on the areas raised in the first interviews and a greater sense of how individual or general the experiences were.

The study was conducted over a six-month period, with regular meetings of the project team interspersed with periods of data collection and analysis. It aimed to be both descriptive and action-oriented in that it attempted to uncover and describe everyday reading, and also to draw out implications for the classroom from what the students said about their personal reading practices.

The teacher-researchers on the team (Perkins, Lahoud and O’Sullivan), describe the families they worked with and what they learned about their daily reading practices. They outline the family situations before arrival and in Australia. They also trace the typical reading practices of different members of the family and note how these have changed or adapted as a result of their experiences of migration, language learning and settlement. They also include information gathered from other AMEP students from the same language backgrounds about their own learning experiences and reading practices. From these accounts the teacher-researchers draw their own conclusions about teaching reading in AMEP classrooms.
1 Reading practices of students from Lebanon

Hassib Lahoud

The family

The family which was interviewed for the NCELTR Special Project owns and runs a farm in the west of Sydney. They are from the south Lebanese town of Jieh, a coastal town north of Sidon. The first members of the family arrived in Australia in 1988 and the remainder arrived in 1990. All members of the family speak Arabic at home. English is used to communicate with neighbours and for business purposes. The social life of the family revolves around going to the Maronite Church on Sundays and other important religious occasions, such as weddings and cultural gatherings and keeping in contact with relatives and friends. The family consists of four branches which are set out in the family tree.

The family members

Helen
Helen is the grandmother and, at 67 years old, the oldest member of the family. She lives with her son, Joseph, and his family on the farm. She helps with childcare, housework and farmwork. She is illiterate in both Arabic and English and can only recognise a few sight words on kitchen and laundry items.

Joseph
Joseph is 45 years old. In Lebanon he finished school and achieved the Baccalaureate Part II. Some of his school subjects were in Arabic and others were in French. Traditionally, science and mathematics are taught in French or English, and geography and history are taught in Arabic. Joseph was employed as a customs official in Beirut until he came to Australia.

Wadad
Wadad is 38 years old. She was a primary teacher in Lebanon. She is education conscious and is very concerned about the quality of her
Teachers' voices 5

children’s education. She hopes they will go to university after they finish school. She does the housework, cares for the children and helps them with their schoolwork. She also helps on the farm.

Soon after arriving in Australia, Joseph and his wife Wadad enrolled in NSW AMES. Their oral and listening skills improved markedly but their reading and writing lagged behind. Joseph and Wadad have five children. Four of them go to school. The two oldest, George and Joyce, study at a college which offers tuition in the history of Lebanon and Arabic culture as well as teaching about the Maronite Church and its traditions. The two other children go to the local Catholic primary school.

George had two years of primary education in Lebanon before he came to Australia. He is in Year 10 and his major goal is to go to university. He is fluent in English and Arabic. He is also learning standard Arabic at school and the language of media and literature in the Arab World. In addition to his studies, George works on the farm after school and helps his parents with reading difficult texts in English, such as letters and school reports. Most of his reading texts are from school and the library. He likes to read novels in his spare time.

Joyce is thirteen years old. She was three years old when the family emigrated to Australia and has been educated in Australia. So all her reading habits were developed in Australia. She is in Year 8 and her aim is to go to university. She is fluent in Arabic and English. She is also learning standard Arabic at school. Most of her reading texts are school-related. She sometimes reads magazines in her spare time.

Antoine is 43 years old. He finished school in Year 10 and after that he studied to be an electrician for two years in a technical college. He was an electrician in Lebanon for 17 years. He enrolled in NSW AMES in 1991. His oral and listening skills improved but he did not achieve a functional level of literacy. Antoine's aim is to study at TAFE and become a licensed electrician in Australia. He works with his brothers on the farm.

Jacqueline is Antoine's wife. She is 27 years old and has been in Australia for three years. She has the Baccalaureate Part II and one year of university, majoring in law. She speaks Arabic and French fluently. Before she came to Australia she had worked in word processing for a major Beirut newspaper. In Lebanon she had an active social life and many friends. In Australia, she has her brother and a few friends. She joined NSW AMES classes in 1995 but the 510 hours to which she was entitled were not enough for her to achieve functional literacy.

Jean is 40 years old and has been in Australia for eight years. He left school in Lebanon in Year 10 and then worked as a builder. He joined NSW AMES classes in 1990. He achieved competence in spoken English, but his literacy still needs improvement. In Arabic, he reads newspapers, letters and newsletters from the Jieh Association. In English, he reads bills, instructions, the employment pages in the local newspapers and SBS subtitles.

Saïde is 19 years old. She met Jean and married him while he was on holidays in Lebanon. She has been in Australia since March 1998. She
has the Baccalaureate Part II. She speaks fluent Arabic and French. She learned a little English at school. She never joined the workforce in Lebanon. Saide was a typical female reader. She enjoyed reading romantic novels and fashion magazines, in Arabic and French. She also liked exchanging books with friends. Soon after she arrived in Australia, she joined NSW AMES classes, but she felt she could not continue when she was expecting her first baby.

**A mal**

A mal is 37 years old. She is Antoine Jean’s sister and Helen’s only daughter. She looks after her family and helps her husband on the farm. She arrived in Australia with her husband Fouad and two children in 1990. She left school in Lebanon in Year 10. She did not have a job in Lebanon, as she had to look after her family. She did not have a wide social network, and her social life was limited to relatives and a few friends. She studied a few English courses with NSW AMES in 1990, but her reading skills are still not adequate for important daily activities. She gets assistance in her reading from her daughter and relatives.

**Fouad**

Fouad is 47 years old. He had seven years of education. In Lebanon, he had varied work experience as a security officer, a farmer and a builder. He was an active member of his town’s association and had a busy social life. He works on the farm and takes the produce to the market. He is a member of the Jieh Association. He studied English with NSW AMES in 1990.

**Carol**

Carol is 16 years old. She is the eldest of Fouad and A mal’s children. Before coming to Australia, she had two years of interrupted education in Lebanon. She is now in Year 11. She is very involved in school activities. She can speak, read and write Arabic well.

**Other students**

In order to gain a broader view of the reading practices of Arabic speaking people, four more people, who were studying with NSW AMES at the time of the project, were asked to be part of the project.

**Najibe**

Najibe joined NSW AMES in 1998 as a CSWE III student. She wanted to become a childcare teacher. She is single, 35 years old and was born in Zgharta, north Lebanon. She arrived in Australia in 1994. She has many relatives in Australia. In Lebanon she was a primary teacher in a Catholic school. Prior to that she had worked as a secretary and owned a business. She was an active member of the Douehi Family Association. She did not learn English in Lebanon, but she speaks French fluently.

**Itab**

Itab was a CSWE II student at Auburn NSW AMES. She was 18 years old. She was born in north Lebanon. She met and married her husband in Lebanon, and arrived in Australia in 1996. Itab’s education was in Arabic and French. Her aim is to be proficient in English.

**Ghazwa**

Ghazwa joined AMES in 1998 as a CSWE II student. She was 20 years old and married. She was born in north Lebanon. She came to Australia in 1996. She finished school in Year 10. She did not learn English in Lebanon but she is familiar with French. She did not work in Lebanon.
but has skills in dressmaking. She did not have wide community involvement but was active in school affairs. She has friends locally and overseas. She has never been a member of any association. She would like to be competent in all the macroskills.

**Janane**

Janane was born in Lebanon. She met and married her Australian-born husband in Lebanon. She joined AMES classes in 1998 as a CSWE II student. She would like to work in an office. She left school in Year 10 and worked as a confectionery chocolate designer. She has skills in embroidery and painting on silk. She learned Arabic and English at school.

**Reading practices in Lebanon**

In Lebanon people read mainly newspapers, political magazines and entertainment magazines. Some are in languages other than Arabic such as French, English and Armenian. A lot of people are also interested in reading history. The Bible, the Koran and other religious books are widely read.

Reading is valued in Lebanon. Before the Civil War in 1975, Lebanon had one of the highest literacy levels in the Middle East. Although schooling is not compulsory, the Lebanese value education very highly and ensure that their children receive the best education possible. The education system consists of public and private schools. Public schools are free.

The table which follows summarises respondent reading practices in Lebanon.

**Table 1.1 Reading practices in Lebanon**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Did you read a lot?</th>
<th>What did you enjoy reading?</th>
<th>Did you read to others/with others?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>He read a lot, mainly newspapers and magazines. He enjoyed reading poetry and newspapers.</td>
<td>He read letters and news to his mother who is not literate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wadad</td>
<td>She was too busy to read books. She enjoyed reading magazines and romantic novels. Some were in French.</td>
<td>She read stories to her children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>He was very young. He was learning to read.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce</td>
<td>She started to read in Australia.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antoine</td>
<td>He did not read a lot. He read newspapers, and magazines in his spare time, electrical plans at work. He enjoyed reading history.</td>
<td>He used to read letters and news to his mother.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline</td>
<td>She read a lot, mainly books and newspapers. She enjoyed reading novels and women's magazines. Some were in French. At work, she read news items and files.</td>
<td>She used to read with friends and exchange books with them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean</td>
<td>He did not read a lot. He read newspapers in his spare time, house plans for work. He enjoyed reading newspapers.</td>
<td>He sometimes read letters to his mother.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued next page
### Reading practices in Australia

The table which follows summarises what respondents normally read in Arabic and English, their purpose for reading, what texts are difficult to read and why reading is important to them.

#### Table 1.2 Reading practices in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In Arabic</th>
<th>In English</th>
<th>Purpose for reading</th>
<th>Difficulties in reading</th>
<th>Importance of reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>letters, newspapers</td>
<td>bills, labels, instructions, school notes</td>
<td>pleasure and practical</td>
<td>letters from banks</td>
<td>for business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wadad</td>
<td>magazines, newspapers, newsletters</td>
<td>magazines, newsletters, children’s stories</td>
<td>practical</td>
<td>school notes, newspapers</td>
<td>improves knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>textbooks, magazines</td>
<td>textbooks, magazines</td>
<td>pleasure and for school</td>
<td>A rabic texts</td>
<td>vital for education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Reading practices of students in Lebanon**

The table which follows summarises what respondents normally read in Arabic and English, their purpose for reading, what texts are difficult to read and why reading is important to them.

#### Table 1.2 Reading practices of students in Lebanon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did you read a lot?</th>
<th>What did you enjoy reading?</th>
<th>Did you read to others/with others?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saide</td>
<td>She was a typical reader. She used to borrow books in Arabic or English from the library. She used to read mostly fashion magazines and romantic novels.</td>
<td>She used to exchange books with friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amal</td>
<td>She was too busy to read. She read magazines and newspapers for pleasure.</td>
<td>She read stories to her children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fouad</td>
<td>He used to read a lot. He read newspapers and he enjoyed reading history.</td>
<td>He used to read stories of famous people in Lebanon to guests and family.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>She was too young to read.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najibe</td>
<td>She used to read a lot. She enjoyed reading the Bible, religious books and romantic stories.</td>
<td>She used to read to illiterate relatives and friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghazwa</td>
<td>She used to read a lot, primarily the Koran, newspapers and magazines.</td>
<td>She used to read to her brothers and sisters, read with others in the mosque.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itab</td>
<td>She used to read a lot including the Koran, histories of famous people and entertainment magazines.</td>
<td>She used to read to her brothers and sisters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janane</td>
<td>She used to read a lot, mainly magazines and history.</td>
<td>She used to read stories to her nephew.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Arabic</td>
<td>In English</td>
<td>Purpose for reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce</td>
<td>textbooks</td>
<td>textbooks</td>
<td>pleasure and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>magazines letters</td>
<td>magazines letters</td>
<td>for school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antoine</td>
<td>newspapers magazines</td>
<td>bills letters</td>
<td>pleasure and practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>letters</td>
<td>local papers instructions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline</td>
<td>newspapers magazines</td>
<td>bills magazines</td>
<td>pleasure and practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>letters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean</td>
<td>newspapers letters</td>
<td>bills local paper</td>
<td>practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>newsletters</td>
<td>instructions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SBS subtitles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saide</td>
<td>newspapers letters</td>
<td>forms bills letters</td>
<td>pleasure and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>magazines</td>
<td>instructions</td>
<td>purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prayer book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amal</td>
<td>newspapers Bible</td>
<td>advertising material recipes</td>
<td>pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>newsletters religious texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fouad</td>
<td>Bible religious books</td>
<td>advertising mail</td>
<td>pleasure and practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>newsletters</td>
<td>bills labels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>instructions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>school texts</td>
<td>school texts</td>
<td>study and pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>magazines novels</td>
<td>magazines novels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najibe</td>
<td>newspapers magazines</td>
<td>newspapers magazines</td>
<td>study and pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>novels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itab</td>
<td>Koran prayer books</td>
<td>advertising TV programs</td>
<td>for pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>magazines</td>
<td>class texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghazwa</td>
<td>Koran stories</td>
<td>SBS subtitles</td>
<td>pleasure and religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>advertising mail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janane</td>
<td>newspapers magazines</td>
<td>class texts</td>
<td>pleasure and study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>history</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading diaries
The respondents were asked to keep a diary over seven days. Their reading practices are summarised below.

Amal
Amal read mostly newspapers and magazines. She talked about what she read to her family. She read stories to her youngest son. She also read, to a lesser extent, labels, TV programs, notes from school, letters, bills and the street directory.

Fouad
Fouad read mostly Arabic newspapers and stories about famous people in Arabic. He talked about these stories to his family. He also used the street directory and read signs for transport purposes. He read labels related to farming. He read advertising material for shopping purposes.

Carol
Carol was an active reader during the week. Being a high school student, she read mainly school texts. In her spare time, she read daily newspapers, stories, TV programs and advertisements. She read and explained notes from school to her parents. She used timetables for transport.

Jean
Jean read mainly instructions related to farming such as using fertilisers, pesticides, running machines etc. In his free time, he read mostly Arabic newspapers, magazines and advertisements. He also read timetables and maps for transport. He talked to his brothers and wife about what he read.

Saide
Saide read stories for about eighteen hours, daily newspapers for two hours, advertisements for one hour, magazines, letters, bills and labels for a few minutes. She talked about the texts to her husband, discussing Arabic news items for example.

Antoine
Antoine read mainly newspapers and magazines in Arabic. He spent some time reading advertisements. Other important texts for Antoine were local newspapers, signs, letters and machine instructions. He talked about machine instructions and labels to his wife and brothers.

Jacqueline
Jacqueline spent a lot of time reading magazines and Arabic newspapers. She spent an hour or less on texts such as letters, local newspapers, machine instructions and advertisements. She read labels and bills for a few minutes.

Joseph
Joseph spent a lot of time reading newspapers and magazines, some of which were in Arabic. He spent less than an hour on each of these texts: local newspapers, TV programs, labels, bills, letters, machine instructions, street directory, advertisements and signs. He talked to wife and family about news items, bills and letters.

Wadad
Wadad spent nearly three hours reading stories, one and a half hours on newspapers (some in Arabic) and an hour or less on texts such as local newspapers, magazines, notes from school, machine instructions, bills, TV programs, timetables, maps, labels, messages and signs.

George
As a Year 10 student, George spent several hours reading school texts. He read daily newspapers for 90 minutes, stories for 80 minutes and less than an hour on local newspapers, magazines, TV programs, letters, timetables, messages and signs. During the week, he talked about most of the texts to either his family or classmates.
Joyce spent more than one hour, but less than two hours on each of the following texts: school texts, stories and magazines. She spent a few minutes on newspapers, TV programs, labels and letters. She talked to her family and classmates about school texts and magazines.

Najibe read mainly stories (nine hours), magazines (four hours), daily newspapers (two and a half hours) and textbooks (more than two hours). She spent a few minutes on other texts such as local newspapers, TV programs, letters, street directory, advertisements and signs.

Itab spent about three hours reading stories, more than an hour each on TV programs and letters, about an hour on advertisements and less than an hour on newspapers, magazines, timetables, messages and signs. She talked about TV programs, letters and advertisements to her husband.

Ghazwa read textbooks for more than three hours, advertisements for about three hours, stories for just under three hours, TV programs for a little more than two hours, local newspapers for one and a half hours and a few minutes on daily newspapers, labels, bills, instructions, maps, street directory, messages and signs.

Janane over seven days, Janane read TV programs for a little less than an hour and spent only a few minutes on magazines, bills, letters, street directory, messages and signs. She talked about letters with her husband.

Suggestions to the classroom teacher

When questioned, the respondents made the following suggestions about reading in the language program:

• Reading should be a regular activity in the classroom.
• The teacher should give reading tasks for homework more often.
• For students to improve their reading, they should be encouraged to participate in all reading activities.
• Teachers should check student reading and should not assume that a student can read well.
• Every student in the class should be encouraged to read aloud.
• Students should be encouraged to join the local library and read in their spare time.
• Students should read forms, government information, magazines and newspaper articles, stories of migrant experience, lives of famous men and women.
• The teacher should choose newspapers and magazines articles very carefully, as some articles may not be appropriate culturally or morally for classroom reading; they may be offensive to students and cause disagreement among them.
• The teacher should teach students different reading strategies.
• Reading tasks should have comprehension questions.
• The teacher should allocate enough time for reading in the classroom.
• Students should have access to dictionaries if required.
• Students should be encouraged to read books at home and give an oral or written report.
• Reading activities should be drawn from a variety of topics and subjects.
• Students should be encouraged to read books at home and to give oral or written reports.
• Reading activities should be drawn from a variety of topics and subjects.
Conclusion

Some respondents argued that the skills in reading Arabic do not assist them to read in English because Arabic is linguistically so different from English and is written from right to left. However they believe that knowledge of French helps them in reading English because of the similarity of the two languages.

Some respondents had difficulty reading important texts in English such as bills, business letters and social security information. Most of their reading material, whether in Arabic or English, came from newspapers and magazines. It seems the adult respondents spend more time reading Arabic texts for pleasure. This is partly because they feel more confident reading in Arabic and partly to preserve their first language and to keep informed about the political situation in the Middle East. English is read more for practical, study or community purposes.

It is clear from this research that students may read a wide range of text types in Arabic and/or English, depending on needs and interests. A wide range of reading texts therefore needs to be presented in class. It is useful for students to learn various generic skills such as decoding English sounds from spelling, skimming for key words and a wide range of strategies for dealing with vocabulary etc. It is also important to encourage reading for meaning.

It is clear that assumptions cannot be made about all the reading needs of students. Therefore it is necessary to plan classroom teaching and learning activities after consultation with students as to what specific needs they have in reading English. It may also be necessary to plan for individual reading tasks where students have specific needs not commonly shared by other classmates.

The above data provide evidence that the needs of students not in the workforce are different to those in the workforce, and that student aspirations should also be taken into account in the planning and delivery of classroom activities. After consultation with different groups, different texts might be selected for them.
2 Reading practices of Chinese-speaking students

Judy Perkins

Introduction

In order to study the reading practices of students from Chinese-speaking backgrounds I organised to interview one student and her family in their home. I also organised interviews with another eight students. The students were all studying at English Language and Literacy Services (ELLS) in Adelaide.

This paper outlines the reading practices of these students before they came to Australia and their reading practices since migration. It also outlines the experiences which the students have had in learning to read in English. The paper draws some implications for the adult ESL classroom from their experiences and suggestions.

Lin and her family

At the time of the study, Lin lived with her daughter, Susie, and her parents in a quiet suburb not far from the sea in Adelaide. We sat in her living room, drinking fragrant Chinese tea, while we talked about her family and her life in Australia. Her mother and father, Jin Li and Dong, contributed to the conversation through Lin, who acted as interpreter. Susie sat with her grandmother, looking at picture books and chatting away quietly.

Lin did not live in an area with a high proportion of Chinese residents and did not generally mix with the Chinese community. She sometimes shopped in Chinatown, but more often at her local shopping centre. While Lin had got to know the city quite well, her parents did not feel able to catch a bus without her and tended to stay within the local area. They all consulted a local family doctor who was not a Chinese speaker and Lin acted as translator when necessary.

Lin

When I interviewed her, Lin had been in Australia for almost six years. She came to Australia to join her husband who had migrated to Australia several years earlier. When he first came to Australia he worked in a factory, then studied at university and has been working in a professional field for a few years now. When Lin first arrived in Australia she lived with her husband and his family, leaving all her family behind in Canton. She had learnt some English at high school but found it impossible to speak or to understand Australians:

Even simple English I can’t understand. But when people write I know.

As she was living with her husband and his family she did not have to use English at all, either at home or outside the home:

Sometimes if we go to the bank or government department I don’t need to speak because my husband do. I don’t need English. So at the beginning I don’t use. Even I been in Australia two years, my English still didn’t get any improve. I didn’t have chance to meet people who speak English.
Lin started going to English classes soon after she arrived but was not able to benefit from them:

_I was pregnant and not very well. Also the family problems, so I didn't have time to concentrate my study so this is no useful for me. Not the class for me._

She emphasised that it was her circumstances which made it impossible for her to benefit from classes at this time. Two years later, after her daughter was born, she separated from her husband and moved to another city. She then felt more settled and started to learn English again:

_I start again much better. At that time I felt my English improve quickly and also I have leave my husband and I do everything by myself so I can understand people. I can do everything myself. I can go anywhere, to bank, to office, I can manage._

At the time of the interviews, she had completed her AMEP entitlement and was studying a full-time course - English for Tertiary Studies, in preparation for going to university. She had not yet decided what she would study but it would be an area in which it is easy to find a job. Her daughter Susie was almost four years old and would soon be starting kindergarten.

**Lin’s parents**

Lin’s parents were both retired and came to Australia on a temporary visa to be with their daughter and granddaughter for a while before going back to China to spend time with their son and his family. They would be coming back to Australia, either temporarily or as permanent residents. They did not speak any English and had not been to any English classes. If they came back for a longer period, or if they decided to live in Australia permanently, they would probably go to classes to learn English.

Dong, Lin’s father, was born in a large city in Canton, in the 1930s. He left school after Grade 9 and then worked for ten years. He had an ambition to go to university and studied hard by himself through these years. He passed the university entrance exam and was accepted into a journalism course at university which was not his field of choice. He tried to change subjects but could not:

_This is problem in China. Now it's getting better, but before, you don't like the subject the university choose for you, you have to learn, otherwise you can't go to university._

He never worked as a journalist but went to work in the planning department of a large city council which was responsible for the water supply and other services. He worked there until he retired.

Jin Li, Lin’s mother, was fortunate enough to be able to study her subject of choice, kindergarten teaching. She worked as a kindergarten teacher and then as a kindergarten principal until she too retired.

Dong and Jin Li had three children. Lin studied chemical engineering and then worked in a paper mill until she left for Australia. Their other two children were still in China. Their son was married with young children and their other daughter was single and was considering coming to Australia to be near her sister.

**Individual reading practices in China**

In China, the whole family were regular readers and had many books in the house. Newspapers were an important part of their lives:
My family has six or seven kinds of newspaper. They often bought books and magazines, rarely using libraries. They were given books and information booklets by their workplaces:

... like now they retire they get some books about old people life.

Dong used to read the newspapers every day and he also read novels, especially famous classical novels. As part of his everyday work he had to read documents such as reports, plans, memos, letters, policy documents etc. He always liked reading about politics and current affairs but read less now they had television.

Jin Li also used to read the newspaper daily and liked reading magazines about marriage, health, the daily life, old age. She read novels, biographies and the Chinese edition of the Reader's digest. She loved classical Chinese novels like The red mansion. Reading was also an essential part of her work as she had to read policy documents, reports and professional literature.

Lin liked to read magazines about health, beauty and fashion, as well as the newspaper. She enjoyed reading novels, sometimes translations from English, and particularly remembered Gone with the wind. She had to read routinely in her work as a chemical engineer in the paper mill.

Individual reading practices in Australia

In Australia, the family's reading habits had changed considerably. They all read the weekly Chinese newspaper which is produced in Australia and there was a pile of these newspapers in the corner of the living room for re-reading. Lin sometimes read the free local weekly paper The Messenger.

They had few books in their house. The only books in sight were a Chinese novel on a small table and Susie's picture books in a pile on the floor, with the rest of her toys. Lin had some books for her English studies in her bedroom. They brought a few books with them from China, three favourite Chinese classical novels, a recipe book, two books on food and health and a child health and development book. They did not bring more because of weight limits.

They also had some picture books for Susie, both in Chinese and in English. Jin Li had brought a set of about fifty cards with her from China for her granddaughter. Each card had a picture and one or two Chinese characters on the front, with writing on the back describing the picture. Jin Li was very keen to teach her granddaughter to read and spent a lot of time reading to Susie and teaching her to read with these cards. Susie already recognised about one hundred Chinese characters. Lin sometimes read English language picture books to her daughter and sometimes went to the library to borrow cassettes and books for her. However, while her mother was there she generally left it to her. Dong pointed out that Chinese children generally have lots of books and toys:

Now in China is one child policy, so the parents think very important to get children educated. They buy books, lots of books for them. Buy everything – books, clothes, toys, everything they like. If the parents can buy, they buy.

Dong and Jin Li did not understand any English. Jin Li knew the English alphabet but could not read any words and could not recognise signs in the street. Dong had learnt to negotiate his way through one English text - the television program in the newspaper:
Now, actually, my father, every day he reads the TV program. Before, I find the programs, I tell him which is Chinese movie, which is Hong Kong movie, which is other country's movie, but now he does find himself.

Lin read the Chinese and the local newspaper occasionally and sometimes bought a magazine, but never read novels. There were several reasons for this:

- She spent so much time studying for her English course that it left her little time for reading for pleasure.
- Reading in English took her a long time and she found it frustrating and boring—It's so slow.
- She had no idea what to read and none of her teachers had ever discussed this with her. When she went into a library or a bookshop in China she knew what to look for but in Australia she did not know where to start. She knew very little about English authors and what kind of books they write and would have appreciated suggestions as to what she might find interesting:

I don't know the writer. I don't know which book is better to read. In China I can always find a book because I can get information. I know which book. I can find the title. I can read the content and know this is what I like to read. Here I think difficult for me to find and so I don't read. Just one book I know I want to read is 'Gone with the wind' but I haven't read it. I will read. It's very long. I don't have time, but I will read. I like this book. But I don't know many books so I can't read more. I want people will tell me which book.

Learning to read in English

Lin had one experience of reading and enjoying a novel in English. In a high intermediate level class she had to read a short, simple book and give an oral presentation about it. She tried to read it but soon gave up. She found it difficult to read as she had to stop to look up every other word and the story consequently held no interest for her. When she told her teacher that she could not read it, the teacher spent some time with Lin individually after class on three or four occasions. At first the teacher read aloud and Lin listened, frequently asking about vocabulary. It was a laborious process. Then Lin started to read aloud, very hesitantly at first, but within one session her speed increased and she stopped asking about the meanings of words so often. After three or four sessions she was reading much more fluently and was happy to understand the broad meaning of what she was reading. Lin went on to finish the book by herself in a few days. She enjoyed the book and said she had been wrong to think it was boring. She was thrilled with her achievement and this positive experience of reading for pleasure had given her the confidence to think that she will be able to read and enjoy books in English when she has more time.

In Lin's first classes the focus was on grammar, speaking and listening and she did not remember reading very much. The texts they did read were mainly short passages written specifically for English learners. They would read the text and then answer questions about it. One of the things that was difficult for her at this time was having to read business letters, for example from the bank. She never practised reading letters in class but she did practise writing letters and this helped her with reading:

Even we didn't practise reading letters, because we had vocabulary from writing
I think my reading get better. If we do the reading in class it help.
When she reached intermediate level she was placed in a modular program where she was able to choose what she studied. She chose modules which focused on reading and vocabulary, among others. She found them helpful and began to learn reading skills and strategies such as skimming and scanning.

Vocabulary was always a problem for Lin and she felt that often she was learning uncommon words which were not very useful for her:

I think maybe we should learn more vocabulary. I don’t know how many words English people know, how many they need. It’s very hard. I don’t know many vocabulary so reading for me is a problem. I don’t know if vocabulary usual or unusual. I would like teacher tell me which vocabulary we can remember because if unusual we don’t want to remember. And firstly I want to know common words and when I get better I want to know uncommon.

Lin felt that she did not actively learn vocabulary, but picked it up from other activities. She would like to learn some strategies and techniques for learning vocabulary more effectively. One activity which Lin found very useful in learning vocabulary was to learn prefixes, suffixes, root words and how to put them together.

In the English for Tertiary Studies course, she was being exposed to a wider range of texts and was being introduced to research skills. One assignment was to research a given topic and produce an oral and written report. She had to use prescribed texts given by the teacher, locate specific texts in the library, find suitable texts on the Internet and use texts from any other source. While Lin talked to me about this I had the feeling that this was opening up new possibilities for her and giving her the confidence that she would be able to cope with the reading which would be required at university.

**Conversations with other students**

To widen the scope of the reading practices study, eight further students from Chinese-speaking backgrounds were interviewed. These students were:

**Wei**

Wei came to Australia a year before the interview after retiring from his work lecturing and researching in metal physics. He and his wife came to be near their son, daughter-in-law and grandson. His son worked in a lawyer’s office, studying management part-time and his daughter-in-law was a coach at the Sports Institute. His other son lived in China. Before he came to Australia he had the idea that he would do something completely different such as teaching Chinese. However he realised that it would be very difficult to find any work. His wife, who was a maths teacher in China, was studying English full-time.

At the time of the study, Wei was looking after his two year old grandson as well as studying English for twelve hours a week in an intermediate level AMEP class. He studied some English when he was young, but was more proficient in Russian, which he had used in his work. He had learnt some English from the radio and read English grammar books in preparation for coming to Australia. A part from the newspaper, which he read daily, most of Wei’s reading in China was related to his work. This involved reading professional articles in Chinese and Russian, and sometimes in English, about metal physics.
Man Lam and Li Chun shared very similar backgrounds and experiences. They were businessmen from Hong Kong who, in the two and three years that they had been in Australia, had had to travel backwards and forwards from Australia to Hong Kong to look after their business interests while at the same time studying English. They did not intend to work in Australia, although Man Lam was prepared to work for nothing to get practice in speaking English. Man Lam and Li Chun always read the daily newspapers and occasionally read magazines and books. They read various kinds of work documents.

Katie lived and worked in Shanghai before coming to Australia with her husband on a temporary visa. Both she and her husband came to do research into human physiology at a university. Her husband still worked in research but when Katie's contract finished she found work in a clothing factory. After her son was born she continued working for a while but stopped because her son was often sick and did not eat or sleep properly when he was in childcare.

She planned to work again when her son was at school and, because of her experience in the factory, where she learnt to cut and sew jackets, intended to study design at TAFE and then work in fashion. She recognised that if she wanted to study and go into business she would have to improve her reading and writing skills. She had a lot of problems with English while doing research. She learnt English informally in the clothing factory, but had never learnt to read and write. When she became a permanent resident she became eligible for English classes and decided to use the opportunity.

In Shanghai, Katie had to spend a lot of time reading professional articles and research papers to keep up with developments in her field:

Most time in library you read working books. Every year is different research, you must read lots of books. In China every day have lots of books at home. After dinner you read your working books. So you spend a lot of time reading. It's really hard.

When she had time, she liked to read classical Chinese literature and translations of European novels and history books. Katie read the newspaper every day and preferred the local newspaper to the national one. She had a newspaper delivered to her house and each office in her workplace had a newspaper each day.

Mei Lin had been in Australia almost two and a half years at the time of the study. She lived with her Australian husband, teenage son and stepdaughter. She had worked in a factory in Canton and in Australia worked part-time as a kitchen hand in a Chinese restaurant. She worked the evening shift and was consequently very tired when she came to morning classes. She found it hard to concentrate in class and to do homework. She would love to have a better job but realised she would not get one unless her English improved. She did not read much either at work or in her leisure time, but read the newspaper every day, often taking an hour to read while having Yum Cha in a restaurant.
Yu Ping  Yu Ping came to Australia to be near her daughter, who was married to an Australian. She had family and friends in other Australian cities. She worked as a Russian translator in Beijing until she retired and intended doing voluntary work when she had finished studying English. She had already done some voluntary work in a school library and enjoyed it very much. She had always been a keen reader of Russian and Chinese novels and often used to read magazines about Chinese medicine, cooking, health, culture and films. She read the Beijing newspaper every day.

Qing  Qing came to Australia to marry her second husband, whom she met when he visited Shanghai after having lived and worked as a toolmaker and plumber in Australia for ten years. Her daughter was studying at university. Qing had a degree in business management and worked for an import-export company in their Shanghai and Hong Kong offices. She believed that there are good opportunities to trade with China and planned to study a business course at TAFE before starting her own business. She did voluntary work with her church and studied English for twelve hours a week. Qing’s daily reading before she came to Australia included magazines, newspapers and the Bible, as well as the reading she did every day at work. In her leisure time she enjoyed reading classical Chinese literature and translations of European authors such as Balzac, Dickens and Hugo.

Reading newspapers

As in Lin’s case, the reading habits of these students had changed. They all still read the newspaper in Chinese, but not as much as before. Some of them bought the Chinese newspapers published in Australia, but did not read them every day, except for Man Lam who read the Hong Kong newspapers every day on the Internet. Some of them also read Australian newspapers. The free local newspapers with local news and advertising which are delivered each week to every house in Adelaide were the most popular:

- It’s good. I can look at pictures to understand, and I learn English from it.
- I read The Messenger, but only TV programs.
- I read some Messenger every week. I use my dictionary.
- I read for renting house.

Katie and Wei bought a local paper at the weekend, mostly for the advertising:

- I buy The Advertiser at weekend and look how to rent house, how to go the outing, how to find a house and garage sale.
- Once or twice I want job and read The Advertiser.

It would seem that in Australia they had lost both the daily activity of reading newspapers and a connection to what was happening in the world, locally, nationally and internationally.

Reading in everyday life

As far as functional reading is concerned, such as reading letters from Government agencies, the bank, the local council etc, the students used a number of strategies to help them when they could not understand. These strategies included:

- 
- 
- 
-
• asking for help from family and friends
• occasionally asking for help from a teacher
• asking for help with letters or forms from the Overseas Chinese Association
• always keeping a dictionary to hand.

According to Mei Lin, the dictionary is a good friend.

Reading for pleasure

It is in the area of reading for pleasure that the greatest changes had taken place. Magazines on health, Chinese medicine and cooking had been popular with all the women and politics and current affairs were popular with the men. In Australia, they no longer read magazines, as Chinese magazines are generally not available here and Australian ones are too difficult to read.

Katie, Yu Ping and Qing, as well as Lin and her parents, had always loved reading novels but now almost never read them. Katie had occasionally borrowed a Chinese book from her local library but the choice was very limited.

Lin’s responses made me consider myself as a reader. I cannot imagine life without reading. I wondered how it felt to have lost this part of the self. For Lin, this may be a temporary loss, as over the years she will become more and more fluent in English and more able to take part in and understand Australian cultural life. For the older ones, however, it is likely that they will never be fluent enough to read books in English.

Reading in class

For some of these students, their priority in coming to English classes was to improve speaking and listening:

- Reading not too difficult for me. Listening very difficult.
- If I can speak, then OK. If no speak, life is problem.
- In school, teachers understand us, but when we go outside, no-one understands us. So speaking and listening very important.

For Lin, Katie and Qing however, although speaking and listening was a high priority in their everyday life, they knew that reading and writing would be crucial when they started to study at university or TAFE.

Katie had had several different teachers and commented on their different approaches to teaching reading. These different approaches had a great impact on how she experienced reading activities in the classroom:

In Maria’s class we read lots. You read this page and you write what’s interesting. She asks you lots of questions. Joe gives lots of reading, formal letters, reading for when you go to hospital. In Maria’s class we do lots of reading but in other courses we don’t do much, and it’s hard. Sarah’s class not too hard. I think older teacher more experienced, she can explain a lot, what’s your problem, what you can do. But Philip is younger, different. Sarah, before you read she explain what you read, what’s problem, what you must be careful. So after that reading is easier. Angela gives one page – so hard, so hard! So many words, so much vocabulary!

Katie was in one class which focused on reading and writing and her teacher talked a lot about reading:

Maria says to us, you can’t read every word, it’s a long time, you must read quickly, just to find what this or this. She suggests for us reading English books. If one
page, two or three new words, OK. If many new words you need dictionary, long time one page, you forget this book, change for another easy one, help you read quick. If more new words you get bored, don't want to read. It's good idea. Maria's class was really useful for me, everything in that class.

One of Lin's teachers had also talked explicitly about reading strategies and Lin could talk about the reading strategies she had learnt:

You don't have to know every word, you can guess from the sentence. And you read first paragraph, first sentence and last paragraph last sentence.

In contrast, the others could not talk about classroom reading activities, only saying that they read and then answered questions. When I talked about reading for specific information they all thought they had done this, but could not articulate it. Qing, in particular, would have benefited from learning reading strategies. She spent hours at home each evening on self-chosen tasks such as looking up every word from classwork and homework and copying out sentences. Her teacher, at the time of the study, had a folder of simple short stories for students to borrow, but Qing had no time to read them because of her belief that she needed to know every word:

Every night I work, work. No time to read. Last night, after midnight I still working.

When asked what kind of texts they read in class they mentioned newspaper articles, stories and letters. Often the vocabulary was a problem and too specialised. Katie, with her background in medical physiology, said:

Last week all medical words. So hard for me. I take it home and read long time, some vocabulary I still can't remember. Because these words in your life you never use them.

The students would have liked to read texts that related to everyday life:

- We can read about any topic — shopping, government, council, local area. We don't know about council, where we live, what is there.
- Sometimes we talk and read about something we can use it in the life. That's good.

Yu Ping would also have liked to read about Australian history and famous Australian people, so that she could learn about Australia while practising reading.

One or two teachers had suggested that they borrow books from the AMEP centre library and had recommended particular texts. These sometimes turned out to be too difficult and so were abandoned. Other teachers had never talked about reading except for what had been set in class.

An activity which was popular, although not often done in class, was reading aloud. They would have liked to do more of this but recognised that it took up a lot of class time.

Vocabulary was a big issue for all students. Over and over again when talking to these students I heard the phrases, So many words, So hard. Like Lin, they wanted to learn the most common words first, and to know which were the most common words. It would seem to be helpful for all of them to learn strategies for learning vocabulary more effectively.
Implications for teaching

Migration involves both loss and gain in many areas of life. In talking to these students I began to think about two particular areas of loss.

1 The loss of the reader self

The first loss is the loss of the reading self and all that accompanies it. Think of all the ways in which reading pervades our lives. It is a source of great pleasure, a way of relaxing and of forgetting troubles and a means of learning about the world and about ourselves. We enter into new worlds when we read and are stimulated intellectually and emotionally. Think of curling up in bed with a good book, passing time in the doctor’s waiting room or on a plane and leafing through a recipe book or a gardening magazine to get some fresh ideas. A friend tells you about a great book she has just read, lends it to you and later you have a lively discussion about it. At the photocopier or over lunch you and your colleagues talk about a controversial article in the newspaper or your reactions to a story about local events. You take up a new interest and go to the library or bookshop to read about it. You have shelves full of books in the house, some well-read and well-loved and others reminders of and links with people, places and emotions in your past. Migration to a country with a different language and culture means that a lot of this is now closed off to you.

So what can we do about this in the classroom? We can find out who likes reading and what they like to read and then provide or suggest ways in which the learners can read either in their first language or in English. We could do this by:

• having a class discussion or completing a questionnaire or survey about reading habits
• reading brochures about local libraries and how to join them
• informing learners about the community language sections of local libraries and making them aware that they can suggest particular books for purchase by their library
• ensuring that all learners have joined and can find their way around the AMEP centre library
• giving learners a list of suitable reading materials in your school library with the call numbers
• requesting the library to purchase more readers for elementary learners
• taking the class to the library for regular borrowing
• giving learners a way of determining whether a text is at a suitable level for reading for enjoyment
• having a folder of very short, simple texts in a variety of genres, both fiction and non-fiction, for beginning learners to borrow
• providing each learner with a reading record to fill in during a course
• giving choices about what students read in class, both individually and as a whole group, to cater for different interests
• talking about books and authors and different genres, with intermediate and post-intermediate learners
• using magazines as reading texts
• setting aside classtime for silent reading, either for some or all of the students.

2 Loss of contact with the world

The second loss is the loss of knowledge of current events and through this a loss of connectedness to the local community, the nation and the world. When you stop
reading the newspaper, or do not read it regularly, you lose touch with what is happening in the world. The television news gives some idea of what is happening but without a good understanding of English the only clues to what is happening are the images. It was clear from talking to these students, and talking to others since, that they have a feeling of not knowing, of being in the dark about what is happening in local, national and international affairs. This can lead to feelings of isolation and disconnection. The Chinese students that I talked to were fortunate in that there are Chinese newspapers published in Australia but for many language groups this is not the case.

To counteract this we can bring news into the classroom by:

- having regular discussions about what is in the news which with beginning learners may mean just focusing on words and phrases
- building up vocabulary related to current events
- bringing a variety of newspapers into the classroom and helping learners to negotiate their way through them
- collecting articles related to the topic you are working on and displaying them in the classroom
- building strategies for watching the news on TV such as learning vocabulary and identifying key words
- teaching learners how to use the Internet so that they can read newspapers in their first language in a library or at home.

Explicitness in the teaching of reading

Both Lin and Katie could talk about reading. For example, they could talk about strategies for dealing with difficult texts, about choosing appropriate reading material and about reading for the main idea. They exhibited a confidence in talking about reading that was absent in the other learners.

If we want to help learners to become confident and effective readers we need to:

- teach the metalanguage that will enable learners to conceptualise and talk about reading and learning to read
- name the different ways of reading a text eg reading for specific information, reading for the main idea, reading for detail
- incorporate a variety of different reading tasks and activities into a course
- make the purpose of each reading task clear
- talk routinely about the skill of reading as well as the content of what is being read.

Learning vocabulary

All of the learners talked about the difficulties presented by the amount of vocabulary they needed to read. A greater focus on learning vocabulary and how to learn vocabulary more effectively would be of benefit to these learners. To support their vocabulary development we could:

- tell learners which new words are common and which are less common
- teach strategies and techniques for recording new vocabulary
- teach strategies and techniques for learning new vocabulary more effectively eg grouping similar words, using mnemonic devices and learning prefixes and suffixes
- encourage learners to make individual decisions about how much new vocabulary they can learn and to set realistic learning goals for themselves
- routinely review new vocabulary in later lessons and recycle vocabulary in different activities and macroskills
- give learners time in class to organise and learn new vocabulary.
**Reading aloud**

As we saw with Lin, reading aloud with her teacher enabled her to gain fluency and confidence in reading. Perhaps it is important to allow some time for this activity, particularly for those learners who are struggling with reading. Volunteers who help in the classroom could also read with individuals or small groups of learners, either during lessons or as a separate activity.

**Conclusion**

It was a privilege to talk to these learners and to hear about their lives and experiences. I came away with a greater appreciation of what has been lost to our learners when they can no longer pick up the newspaper to find out what is happening in the world or reach for a book to pass an enjoyable hour. I also have a greater understanding of how the teacher's approach to the teaching and learning of reading impacts on the learner. It has confirmed my belief in the importance of explicitly teaching skills and strategies for approaching a text, as well as the metalanguage for talking about reading.

**Note:** All the names of students and teachers have been changed but student comments are reproduced verbatim.
3 Reading practices of El Salvadorean students
Kim O’Sullivan

Introduction
The investigation of reading practices among El Salvadorean migrant residents in Hobart included interviews with two members of an El Salvadorean family and interviews with seven other El Salvadorean students studying at AMES Tasmania. This paper details findings in relation to:
• general reading practices in El Salvador
• reading practices in Spanish
• reading practices in English
• student perspectives on reading activities in the classroom.

The final section of the paper outlines a number of implications which the study has for teaching reading in the adult ESL classroom.

The family
The initial contact with the family was through Susan, a grandmother in her mid-forties, who was enrolled in a work-focus course in AMES Tasmania. Having identified Susan, the task was to convince her of the benefit of assisting the investigation, bearing in mind the fairly recent experience of El Salvadorean refugees and a possible and understandable mental association between the provision of personal information and subsequent political manipulation. However with bilingual assistance, Susan was reassured and agreed to be interviewed along with her adult daughter, Dorothy, and Dorothy’s own young daughter, Jane.

Susan and her family came to Hobart in 1991, fleeing persecution in El Salvador for their religious beliefs. The process of securing refugee status in Australia had taken the family five years. Contrary to the initial guidelines set for the study, Susan did not possess an ASLPR of 1+ across the skill areas. At first she only felt comfortable when her daughter was present in case some interpretation was necessary, but she did take part in the third interview unassisted.

On arrival in Australia the family consisted of:
• Susan
• her husband, from whom she is now separated
• the oldest daughter, Dorothy
• the oldest son, Ernesto
• three younger children Abbie, Maria and George
• Dorothy’s husband Juan.

Prior to the war Susan’s husband worked as a builder, Susan was the primary home caregiver and a committed member of the Jehovah’s Witness Fellowship. She visited homes and preached the group’s religious message. The children were actively involved in school and sporting pursuits.
Educational background of family members

Susan
Susan’s formal education had not extended beyond the fourth year of primary school because of her rural situation. It was a very long walk to the nearest government school (which was almost free), and there was always work to be done on the farm.

Dorothy
In the years immediately before the family’s departure from El Salvador, Dorothy married Juan which interrupted her plans to gain her high school diploma. She had returned to school part-time while she worked as a shop assistant, the kind of work she had done since she was 15. By working, Dorothy had the means to pay the often prohibitive cost of books and fees associated with high school and college education.

Ernesto
Ernesto also left school prior to the diploma year. He was working as a builder.

Abbie, Maria and George
The three youngest children have all completed Year 12 in Australia.

Individual reading practices in El Salvador

In the interviews Susan and Dorothy discussed their reading practices in El Salvador:

Susan
Despite a lack of formal education, Susan’s adult life in El Salvador was perhaps more literacy centred than many of her contemporaries because of the requirements of her faith. Susan considers herself a good reader in Spanish. Having married and moved to the city, Susan’s involvement with the Jehovah’s Witnesses meant that the reading demands were quite heavy. She had constant Bible study and also had to keep up with the ministry’s regular broadsheets and magazines. Being responsible for the care of the home and children, she had little time for, or interest in, additional reading. She commented that she sometimes found the ideas expressed in fiction to be a little crazy.

Dorothy
Dorothy read fiction for pleasure once she was working. This included short novella length books, condensed books, complete novels and sometimes comic books. In her late teens she was a regular newspaper reader. She also read her school texts, seemingly very history focused, and church material. Dorothy believes she was an atypical reader because many people her age had had little interest in reading beyond the newspaper, comic books and occasional condensed fiction. She talked about the importance within El Salvadorean society of group interaction and family get-togethers and the essentially oral and interactive nature of communication.

In relation to the common reading practices of older Salvadoreans, Susan and Dorothy cited the newspaper and the Bible. Susan’s husband read non-fiction books about history, natural phenomena such as the weather and other parts of the world, including Australia as they prepared to migrate.

Susan said that it was quite common for parents, usually the mother, to help their children with homework and show an interest in their efforts...
to read. Even though secondary education was not accessible to all in El Salvador, because of the high costs, it was perceived by the population as very necessary.

Language learning

Susan
Susan’s health has not been good since her arrival in Australia, having been plagued by one minor ailment after another. She attributes this to a general feeling of tension possibly associated with the separation from her country and her extended family. Her progress in English has been quite painstaking and today she still requires confirmation of meaning from the younger family members when dealing with correspondence from doctors, Government departments and even AMES.

Dorothy
On arrival in Australia, Dorothy had a young baby, Jane, to care for. Nevertheless she, Juan and her mother and father attended AMES for varying lengths of time. Dorothy was fairly quick to gain survival English. Perhaps contributing to this was the compulsory English study she undertook in high school, although she says she was not very interested in English at the time. Seven years later she reports that while she is now fairly secure with general vocabulary in written texts she still finds it difficult to decipher idiomatic or uncommon language. She often requires a dictionary or the assistance of one of her younger sisters when reading letters from Jane’s school, Government departments or anything to do with legal matters.

Juan
Juan, whose answering machine greeting is delivered in confident, native-like English, trusts much of the household reading to Dorothy as he believes his English literacy is not as secure as hers.

Jane
Jane is progressing well at school. She is interested in the school program and appears completely bilingual, speaking and reading Spanish at home.

Reading practices in Australia

Susan
Susan’s day-to-day reading in English involves business letters, supermarket labels, letterbox advertising material, timetables, instructions, some sections of the local newspaper, AMES grammar textbooks and the occasional flip through the Lady Diana stories in a magazine bought by one of the daughters. Susan’s reading in Spanish does not seem to have decreased since migration and despite an ongoing problem affecting her eyesight she continues to undertake Bible studies and to read the regular church magazines in Spanish. The issues dealt with in these magazines are later discussed in English at church meetings in which Susan and Dorothy participate. In church Susan sometimes sings the well-known hymns in Spanish, reading from her own hymnbook while the rest of the congregation sings in English. The books on Susan’s bookshelf are all in Spanish apart from dictionaries. They are almost entirely related to her religious faith and were acquired from the church since arrival in Hobart.

Dorothy
These days Dorothy has another small baby so she is reading quite a lot of literature from the baby clinic in English. She does not read the paper daily. However when she receives the two papers, the Hobart Mercury
and the Australian, which are sent free to migrant homes as an initiative of the Migrant Resource Centre, she enjoys reading them in their entirety. She reads magazines such as New Idea and the Women’s Weekly but, she says, not as keenly as many other El Salvadorean women now living in Hobart. Dorothy always reads the advertising mail which comes to the house along with business letters, personal letters and cards from English-speaking friends. She does not read novels in English or Spanish these days but enjoys reading comic format stories in English. Dorothy reads the regular church magazines in Spanish but if the Spanish version is unavailable, she will read the English version. She prefers to read stories she thinks will appeal to her, relate to her experience or have a happy ending.

**Future plans**

**Dorothy** Reflecting on the successes of migration Dorothy states happiness, peace and lack of anxiety as things she could not achieve in El Salvador. This contrasts with Susan’s experience of migration. Learning English is counted as another major achievement and Dorothy’s hopes for the future include a better job at some point. At present her second baby is three months old but she still has a job in the chicken factory in Hobart. Her husband has worked shifts at a bakery for the last two years.

**Susan** Susan hopes that the future will bring an improvement in her English and the chance of a job. She wants happiness and good jobs for her children and grandchildren. At present Ernesto works in the chicken factory with Dorothy, Maria is working at the same bakery as Juan and Jorge has a job at the boot factory. At the moment Abbie is undertaking TAFE studies and advanced English at AMES. Susan’s husband now does seasonal work in the apple orchards south of Hobart.

**A wider view of the El Salvadorean community**

The study of reading practices widened to seek information from seven other AMES students from El Salvador. These students and their occupational backgrounds are outlined in the table which follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupational backgrounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rene S</td>
<td>a forty year old telecommunications engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>a twenty-five year old architectural design student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria-Theresa (Monica’s mother)</td>
<td>a teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar</td>
<td>a thirty year old accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria (Oscar’s wife)</td>
<td>a secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rene A</td>
<td>a forty year old upholsterer, musician and political activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maribel (Rene A’s wife)</td>
<td>a mother and housewife who spent her school years in Honduras before returning to El Salvador</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Educational backgrounds
Of the seven people interviewed two had left school after the primary years, one had a high school diploma, two had college level diplomas and two were enrolled at university at the time of migrating to Australia.

General reading practices in El Salvador
Interviews with this group of students revealed the following facts about El Salvador.

• Greater educational opportunity is available to those who live in urban areas, although a primary education is theoretically available to all.
• 90% of urban residents read the newspaper daily but many people in rural areas, even if they could read, would not have sufficient funds to make daily newspaper reading a priority.
• Reading ability and practices are indicators of financial status.
• There is only one state library for six million citizens, so people have to buy books if they want to read them.
• Rene S believes that good literature is out of the reach of the majority of citizens.
• Oscar believes that the habit of reading is something developed in childhood and that it requires access to reading material beyond that provided by the school. He said that school materials are often limited to basic teaching texts which develop decoding skills and extension materials which are usually not stimulating. He found it disappointing that these school materials never dealt with the modern history of El Salvador.
• Rene A also pointed to the inadequacies and blandness of reading materials supplied in government schools. He said that schools are the only place where some people have access to any reading material. He feels that students are never offered relevant information about El Salvador or introduced to classic or challenging contemporary literature which might stimulate their interest in books and reading. He sees this as an act of government repression of the poor.

Individual reading practices before migrating
Everyone interviewed considered themselves to be good readers in their native language and while some attributed this to good teaching at school, others said they had become more fluent through interests in later life. The interviews revealed a diversity of individual reading practices in El Salvador.

• Before migrating, four of those interviewed were in the habit of reading a newspaper every day and the other three read one sometimes.
• Maribel explained that she sometimes read history and other non-fiction books after leaving school because of her friendship with the local school librarian.
• Maria-Theresa, the teacher, was the most avid reader in the group saying that it was a particular love of hers and that throughout her life she had rarely been without a novel in progress. Her professional reading was ongoing and she read special interest magazines and non-fiction books.
• Rene S read a good deal related to his profession and he also read special interest magazines and non-fiction books.
• Monica said she was not a big reader of fiction, finding the demands of academic reading absorbed most of her time. She said she had fairly narrow guidelines for what constituted an interesting book but if she encountered one she would enjoy the reading experience.
• Oscar read novels and non-fiction materials related to his involvement in a political party along with accountancy texts from his university studies.
• Maria had little time for reading apart from general magazines, cookbooks and materials related to her secretarial work.
• Maribel's connections with print included books from the school library, songbook lyrics and the very enjoyable experience of reading children's books with her young son.
• Rene A became interested in Latin American poetry and literature through peer associations later in life and much of his reading, and indeed song and poetry writing, was to do with the political situation in El Salvador.

What they read in Australia
Through the interviews we explored the students' current reading practices in both Spanish and English.

First language reading
• Rene S describes himself as a very keen reader of literature and quoted the words of his father which he was also passing on to his children:

From any good book you will take away something worth remembering.

• In their first language, Rene S and Maria are regular Internet users, reading El Salvadoran newspapers and E-mail from friends and relatives and participating in special interest chat groups.
• Maria also reads letters from El Salvador and magazines in Spanish.
• Rene A is reading Salvadoran newspapers printed in Australia and he and Maribel still sometimes reread the newspapers they brought with them two years ago.
• Maria-Theresa and Rene S are still reading novels in Spanish, some of which have been sent by Salvadoran relatives and others which were brought as part of their personal effects at the time of migration.
• Oscar continues to read novels in Spanish and, through involvement with the financial management of the Salvadoran co-operative in Hobart, continues to read and write in Spanish for business purposes. He also takes part in a weekly, advanced level Spanish as a Foreign Language class as a class assistant in oral activities. He says he is benefiting from this by keeping in touch with his mother tongue in the written form and honing his own spelling skills.

Reading in English
All seven of those interviewed stated that they read the newspaper, or sections of it, daily. The details of their other reading in English follows.
• Rene S, Monica and Oscar read materials related to further study which will allow them to reenter the workforce in their previous professions.
• Rene S is also reading anything he can get his hands on in order to develop his general English reading skills. He buys books and magazines in English, including the Reader's digest, and regularly borrows books from AMES and state libraries.
• Monica is not reading much outside of her course work.
• Oscar says that he now prefers to read in English and reads widely in English even though he still encounters frustration in not understanding a particular word which links components of a sentence and therefore obscures the meaning. His
reading includes novels, special interest magazines such as business journals and non-fiction.

- Maria-Theresa reads a wide range of materials in English including fiction and non-fiction but still sees this activity as essentially to develop her English skills rather than for pleasure or information.
- Rene A still relies heavily on Maribel, other friends and organised assistance groups for translation of virtually all letters and other forms of written English.
- Maribel is a member of the state library system and regularly borrows children’s books to read to her son and non-fiction books about the Australian landscape and cities. She says that she reads less these days than in El Salvador but not because of any lack of Spanish language material or any reluctance to read in English but simply because of the time demands of caring for her young son.

Reading practices and learning English

Almost all of those interviewed believed that the ability to read Spanish was directly related to success in reading English.

- Dorothy believes that since living in Australia she had been surrounded by the written word more than in El Salvador. This includes more letters, more notes from school, more magazines and more printed advertising.
- Maria-Theresa expressed frustration at how her reading ability had surpassed her speaking ability. Through reading, she understood and had opinions about issues raised in class or in conversation, but was often unable to express them orally.
- Monica and Dorothy had observed the struggle of illiterate Salvadoreans to acquire English in Australia.
- All mentioned the usefully high level of crossover vocabulary in Spanish and English which helped reading comprehension, if not pronunciation.
- In contrast to Maria-Theresa, many of the others believed that, regardless of language, the practice of reading allowed people to participate more fully in oral communication. They felt that through reading they acquired understanding of issues and exposure to the opinions of others, as well as familiarity with terms and expressions.
- Monica mentioned that her reading had been reawakened by the experience of reading a range of texts from the AMES library in pursuit of English literacy.

Availability of reading materials

- Oscar was surprised, and very impressed, with the approach to reading development of the school attended by his eight year old which includes sending home attractive and interesting little books to be read nightly with parents.
- Rene S and Maria-Theresa were appreciative of the range of materials available in all TAFE and public libraries.
- Maribel liked the children’s book facilities in public libraries.

Implications for the classroom

The interviews with the El Salvadorean students made me aware of the following implications for teaching reading in adult ESL classrooms.

- The students place a great deal of importance on reading as a tool for developing oral communication, which was largely seen as a more important goal.
The students see the most valuable classroom reading as reading aloud in order for the teacher to check pronunciation.

Some of the students had had the benefit of good teachers of reading in first language while others were almost self-taught. Those who had not attended high school or college in El Salvador thought that the teaching of specific reading skills such as skimming, scanning and the correct use of dictionaries is useful.

Somewhat troubling was the discovery that most of these students could not describe classroom activities which were directed at the development of reading skills. They had completed activities for specific reading skill development but were unaware of the fact. This was confirmed through information gathered from personal knowledge, discussions with other teachers and documented class notes.

Some of those interviewed, not just those with limited first language education, did not have the language to describe the kinds of activities they had done and the kinds of activities they wanted to do. Four of the nine students interviewed appeared unable to differentiate between class activities which related specifically to reading and others which took a written form, such as grammar activities. Without a teaching or linguistic background and given the integrated approach found in many language classrooms, students could be forgiven for describing a session which involves using the Yellow Pages to find the names of particular types of businesses, roleplaying telephone calls to ascertain names of personnel managers and reconstructing models of speculative employment letters, as ‘talking about jobs’ rather than as individual reading, speaking and writing activities.

This discovery suggests that there is a place in classrooms for more overt explanation of what exactly is being practised in each session.

Another area focused on by the study was the issue of choosing classroom and homework reading texts. Some of those interviewed said that they would be grateful for more teacher direction regarding appropriate material for reading for pleasure. However, others believed that reading was an essentially personal choice and, if guided by a teacher, an otherwise self-generated and enjoyable experience could become a chore. There was some pattern to this. Those whose volume of first language reading had been highest and whose present English reading is already diverse, did not want direction in this area. Those who still saw reading in English as being predominantly for skill development, wanted to be set texts to be read in their own time and discussed in class.

This divergence in preference for teacher guidance suggests the usefulness of having sets of readers or reading texts, which include self-correcting activities which could be used for optional extension reading.

When two of the students spoke of their reluctance to read fiction, it became obvious that extension reading material should provide a range of reading texts. It also indicated that using a serialised novel in the classroom to offer opportunities for integrated language work may alienate some students.

During one interview I was surprised when I was told by the student that reading activities practised in class were not perceived as beneficial to her real world reading needs. I prompted her to consider whether activities such as deconstructing business letters had prepared her to make meaning of real letters she received from Government departments etc. However she still saw no connection and suggested that it would be more beneficial to have assistance in reading the actual letters which she did receive.
After reflecting on this, I can now see the benefit of including a weekly session in class when students bring to class real life reading tasks they have which can be discussed with the teacher and perhaps with a small group of students. This individual text analysis could be conducted in conjunction with a self access reading session where the other students work with teacher-devised real life reading comprehension activities. The language features and vocabulary in these personalised discussions of reading materials are likely to be more readily acquired.

Conclusion

Of the many ways in which undertaking this research has informed my classroom practice, an important one has been to reaffirm the dangers inherent in attempting to classify ESL learner needs according to country of origin. Speaking to these people, from the El Salvadoran community in Hobart, I found little overall homogeneity in their educational background or reading experiences.

Some uniformity was found in the area of aspirations relating to life in Australia but these hopes would no doubt be shared by most migrant and non-migrant people in any given country. The overriding desires were to be able to continue in a previously satisfying career or gain training for an emerging one. In the case of parents, their wish was to see their children employed in secure and rewarding jobs and both Susan and Maribel put their hopes for the children's careers ahead of their own.

In relation to the classroom, I found two main areas which point to possible changes in the way we approach reading in the classroom. The first is that the students place a great deal of importance on reading as a tool for developing oral communication and that they see some value in reading aloud as a way of checking pronunciation.

The other significant issue is that most students had not been made aware when classroom activities were addressing reading skills. This indicates that teachers need to be more explicit in their approach to teaching reading and need to make students more conscious of the reading process.

It is important to ask students about their perspectives on language skills and language learning. It is something we should do as part of our teaching practice not just when we are fortunate enough to be involved in a project.
SECTION TWO

Classroom studies

1 Extending reading skills
   Judith Given

2 The benefits of undemanding reading texts
   Alison MacPhail

3 Integrating competencies with reading narratives
   Kay Hodges
Introduction

The studies outlined in this section were conducted over a six-month period. The teachers on the team (Given, MacPhail and Hodges) were interested in investigating the teaching of reading in their classrooms and how their students perceived a more focused approach to the teaching of reading.

The group had regular meetings where issues around the teaching of reading and the use of narrative texts was discussed. Between meetings the teachers developed mechanisms for exploring students' needs in relation to reading and developed approaches to integrating reading into their programs.

All the teachers decided to introduce narrative texts into the classroom and to give students the opportunity to focus on these texts in a more detailed way. The reports in this section prompt us all to look again at three main issues around the teaching of reading.

The first issue is reading aloud. Reading aloud is something which has fallen into disrepute over the years, but it is clear from both the projects outlined in this book that students see it as a valuable activity for a number of reasons. They see reading aloud as:

- providing a model for pronunciation
- making links between letters and sounds
- providing practice in intonation patterns
- supporting the development of vocabulary.

Two of the teachers (Given and MacPhail) arranged for the students to work in small groups with tutor support in order to provide them with the opportunity to read aloud. This was something which their students had identified as a valuable way to approach reading.

The second issue centres on the types of texts which are introduced into the classroom. The texts which the teachers introduced into the classroom were specifically written for ESL learners. Such texts appeared to provide a firm basis for the development of reading strategies. The texts present vocabulary and grammatical structures in a controlled way which does not overburden students with demanding language at the same time as they are developing knowledge of the text type and developing reading skills and strategies.

The final issue is concerned with providing space in the classroom for reading for pleasure. While teachers are concerned with moving through course content and assessing student outcomes, reading for pleasure is sometimes seen as a luxury. However, as Hodges shows, reading stories for pleasure can be integrated with other assessable outcomes within a course structure.

Although the reports in this section do not present activities or approaches which will be new to many teachers, they do prompt us to look again at all these issues in the second language classroom.
1 Extending reading skills
Judith Given

Introduction
I perceived that the students in my class needed to extend their reading skills and this prompted my involvement in the project. Two students in my Term 3 class had also stated that they would like to ‘do more reading’ in the following term. Interestingly, my interpretation of what they meant by ‘do more reading’ was quickly revised once I began to explore their needs in more detail.

Class profile
The class which became the focus of my research was a Certificate in Spoken and Written English II (CSWE II) class of 22 students. Two-thirds of the class were from the former Yugoslavia and the other third came from Taiwan, Iraq, Vietnam, Poland and Japan. The students were from mixed work backgrounds. Some were professionals but most were from clerical and trades backgrounds.

Overall the class was moving towards starting Certificate III with the majority of students finishing 510 hours within the term. They were not an academically oriented class with under-motivated rather than highly-motivated students. There were six male students in the group who were not overly cooperative.

Student needs
My involvement in the project was flagged to students when I asked them to complete a reading survey (see Appendix 1). The survey aimed to explore the kinds of reading they had done in their own countries as well as their reading practices in Australia. This revealed that magazines and books were the most common texts which students read for pleasure in both their own language and in English. Newspapers were read for both practical purposes and pleasure. When asked what they would like to read in English, several students nominated books (amongst other texts) as desirable.

The survey also prompted the students to reflect on their English language learning strategies. However, at first I did not think that the survey responses revealed anything that could help to shape the direction of the project.

I then began to focus simply on the level of difficulty of particular texts which we were reading in the classroom. Students were asked to respond to particular texts in terms of level of difficulty. Several students responded that the difficulty they associated with reading was connected to pronunciation rather than comprehension of the text. So when students said they wanted to ‘do more reading’, what they actually wanted to do was more speaking. They perceived that they did not do enough reading aloud and that this was an important way to improve their general English.

Asking students to reflect on the difficulty of reading texts provided them with the opportunity to articulate a number of needs and perceptions about reading. The students said that they:
• wanted to read aloud after teacher modelling
• found reading aloud in a whole class group a bit daunting
• wanted someone to correct their pronunciation
• wanted to speak as much as possible to Australians.

Project design
The needs which were identified by the students established the direction which the reading project took in my class. As the reading abilities of the group were very disparate, ranging from low CSWE II to CSWE III level, I perceived that the students needed to work in small groups, to read different material from that which they were currently reading and to undertake some language work that was unrelated formally to CSWE outcomes.

I decided that the students also needed to relate to another person as this was their second term with me as their teacher. I felt it was particularly necessary for some of the men to work with a male. I also decided that we all needed to do something at the end of the week that was fun.

Consequently I involved three male volunteer tutors in the project. These volunteers attended for one and a half hours every Thursday as the final activity for the week. The aim was for the students and tutors to read narrative texts. I chose ESL readers which the tutors and students could read over a period of five or six weeks by reading a chapter or two per week.

Step 1
As a lead-in to the project, four groups read half the story Hello who's calling? (Waller 1999). I wanted to establish a teaching sequence which all groups would follow throughout the project. The sequence involved:
1 playing the tape to model pronunciation
2 discussing new vocabulary with teacher or tutor
3 reading of the text by individual students with correction by teacher or tutor
4 predicting the next phase of the narrative
5 discussing particular issues raised by the narrative
6 focusing on particular grammar points and grammar extension activities.

The story Hello who's calling? is about one man's phobia. This provided an opportunity for the students to discuss phobias and to focus on the grammatical structures in the adjacency pair:

A: I'm afraid of spiders.
B: So am I.

Students were asked whether they felt they would benefit from a reading project styled along such lines. The response was very positive and so I decided to proceed.

Step 2
All students read the second half of the story Hello who's calling? and completed the language and discussion exercises provided in the publication.

Step 3
The class was divided into four groups based on reading ability levels, interests, compatibility with each other and compatibility with tutors and the teacher. The groups then followed the activity sequence outlined above.

As reading material for the groups I chose four ESL readers published by NSW AMES:

Group 1 Beginner level
The shark by Marian Waller
Group 2  Post-beginner to intermediate
Waratah romance by Carla Molino

Group 3  Intermediate
Man for hire by Carla Molino

Group 4  Intermediate
Average dead body by John Baylis

It must be admitted that some groups did not follow the sequence exactly and a couple of lessons had to be supplemented with additional stories from Taxi driver (Waller 1999). In Group 1 the tutor and students read The shark almost in one sitting because they could not wait to get to the end!

Step 4
On the final day of the project, students and tutors revised the narrative they had read in class and then talked to other classmates to find out what they had read. If the story interested them, they could borrow the story plus the tape for the weekend. We combined this session with a thank you morning tea for the tutors.

Responses to the project
Overall responses to the project were extremely positive. Benefits mentioned by students in an end-of-project questionnaire (see Appendix 2) included:

- more one-to-one feedback from the small group
- better pronunciation
good to learn pronunciation at a good speed
- increased understanding
we spent time to comprehend the story
- wider vocabulary
- increased confidence
- greater social cohesion in the group which students phrased as new feeling
- enjoyment we enjoyed
- interesting stories with real-life situations and good messages.

Benefits mentioned by tutors included:

- enhanced comprehension
- improvements in individual pronunciation and confidence.

My observations of benefits to students included:

- enjoyment of reading sessions
- some increased ability to self-correct
- a lot of focus on vocabulary
- very positive bonding between tutors and students
- several students borrowing short fiction titles from the library for the first time.

Final thoughts
I was thoroughly pleased with the outcomes of the project, even though it did not yield the kind of data about reading practices that I thought it might. My students did not seem to want to reflect on reading at that level.

It was interesting to revisit, at the students’ instigation, the ‘old-fashioned’ practice of reading aloud and to revisit the narrative text type. It was possible to bring these
together, with the help of volunteer tutors, in a whole experience that was rewarding and satisfying on many levels.

Some students said they would like to repeat such a reading project in all courses. They felt other students should have an opportunity to do such a project and that they would like to read more and longer narrative texts.

I would like to build on the insights I gained from this project and try to reintegrate a number of approaches into my teaching practice. These include:

- modelling every text by reading aloud before students read
- having students read whole texts after they have completed set tasks
- providing a weekly reading for pleasure session with or without the help of tutors

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Waller, M 1999. The shark. Sydney: NSW A M ES
Waller, M 1998. ‘Hello, who’s calling’ in Taxi driver and other stories. Sydney: NSW A M ES
Appendix 1

Reading survey results

You can discuss these questions with your classmates as much as you like.

A  Think about the things you used to read regularly in your own language.

1  Reading for practical personal purposes:
   • Newspaper (4)
   • Notices (1)

2  Reading for pleasure/relaxation
   • Magazines (4) – travel, cars, pigeons, computers
   • Books (4)
   • Newspaper (3)
   • Sports review (1)
   • Poetry (1)
   • Novels (2)
   • Sci-fi/historical novels (1)

3  Reading for work/study
   • Books for school (1)
   • Books (3)

B  Now think about what you read now in English

1  Reading for practical personal purposes:
   • Trading Post (1)
   • Travel guide (1)
   • Wood-working books (1)
   • To buy a car and furniture (1)
   • Notices (2)
   • Forms and bills (2)
   • Newspapers (1)

2  Reading for pleasure/relaxation
   • Magazines (4)
   • Fisherman’s mag (1)
   • Books (1)
   • Pigeon magazine (1)

3  Reading for work/study
   • Worksheets (2)
   • Books (2)
   • Internet (1)
   • Grammar (1)

C  Think about what you would like to read in English, but don’t or can’t. If there is a particular reason (either why you want to, or why you don’t/can’t), please give it.
   • Books (3)
   • Stories about movies
I have read movie books because I can imagine and follow story easily, but I don’t use dictionary, so I would like to not use dictionary (Eba)

D Think about the ways reading helps your general language learning. Discuss these with your group, and see how your answers compare.

• Books (3)

I don’t know but people said to me it works. I think reading is the best way to study English (Eba)
Appendix 2

End-of-project questionnaire

You are now near the end of the reading project. In this time you have continued with the normal classroom-type reading activities, mainly of factual texts. We have read:

- information texts (skin cancer)
- reports (festivals, cities)
- procedural texts (how to use machines)

Has the reading project helped your reading skills in these other areas?
If so, how?
If not, why not?

What do you think have been the benefits of the reading project?

Was there anything about the project that you didn’t like?
Is there anything else we could do as part of the project to help your reading skills?

Has there been any change in your out-of-class reading patterns/activities?

Other comments:
2 The benefits of undemanding reading texts

Alison MacPhail

Introduction

My involvement in the reading project was undertaken with a CSWE III academic focus class. I volunteered for the project for a number of reasons.

My students had expressed concerns in two previous classes about large classes and pronunciation. Class size has been a recurring issue in recent years, especially since the 510 hours limit and the concurrent emphasis on accountability, which is often voluntarily translated into increased testing. The net result of these two factors seems to have been a reduction in consolidating activities such as reading fiction, language games and debates. Students often saw such activities as fun but they also provided an opportunity for teachers to give more individualised attention, particularly to pronunciation. Most teachers feel that they no longer know students as well as they had and consequently are not helping them as effectively with their English.

An additional problem at Southbank TAFE, where I work, has been a reduction in migrant numbers which means that our classes are much more disparate. Cliques, based on either ethnic background or perceived ability in English, are also increasing.

I also had a concern with students' apparent satisfaction with their reading abilities which I regarded as frequently inadequate for their future goals and for CSWE IV work. Although actual reading performance varied a great deal, reading was invariably placed low on student lists of activities of which they needed more.

In a class of this kind, I usually start with a run-down on reading strategies, and give clearly structured reading activities in which students consciously practise skimming, scanning, reading for detail etc. However, I had noticed increasingly that unconfident students, particularly non-Europeans, were having trouble transferring their undoubted L1 abilities. Repeating these structured exercises was tending to compound class divisions. Moreover, although most of the class liked the idea of reading aloud, in practice they found it slow and frustrating because of non-audibility, pronunciation difficulties etc. It therefore tended to reinforce ethnic stereotyping.

When the project was advertised I was looking for a new way to tackle all the above problems. I therefore had a slightly camouflaged, if not precisely hidden, agenda in joining the project. However, practising different reading techniques was also a major concern.

Class profile

The class I was teaching during the project included fourteen women and ten men. Five of these students left during the term. Eleven of the students were in the second phase of the class, finishing Certificate III.

Roughly half the class was European, mainly from the former Yugoslavia and the other half was Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, South American and Bangladeshi. All had at least twelve years of formal education. They had either studied at tertiary level or wanted to. There were three main groups within the class:

1   married professional/paraprofessionals in their 30s or 40s
2   younger newly-weds with Australian partners
3   young singles feeling a bit lost socially.
The project

The project was conducted over seven weeks of a ten-week course and was divided into the following phases:

Phase one

In the first two weeks of the course I discussed informally with the students their perceived reading needs and problems. I then asked them to complete a survey (see Appendix 1) and discussed the results with them.

The responses to discussion and the survey (see Appendix 1) revealed that the group was extremely varied in their interests. Most students confined their reading in English to largely practical areas such as bills, news and any professional reading they could find. They all stated that they would like to be able to read in English at their L1 level of competence and that their perceived problems were lack of time and lack of vocabulary. Few of them voiced my strong belief that a lack of confidence compounded their limitations. There was a very limited perception of reading as an aid to wider language learning.

I therefore decided to concentrate on light reading as a Friday afternoon activity, largely divorced from their other reading work. I was lucky enough to find three volunteers (two women and one man), so I could divide the students into four mixed-language groups which were formed according to their expressed tastes in fiction. These groups were also small enough to make reading aloud less threatening and frustrating and perhaps to allow new friendships to form. The texts chosen were the NSW AMES readers:

• Taxi driver by Marian Waller
• Waratah romance by Carla Molino
• Man for hire by Carla Molino
• Average dead body by John Baylis

I chose these ESL readers because they were relatively undemanding from a language point of view and I hoped this would result in a more relaxed and therefore a more effective reading session.

Before the first session I roughed out a lesson plan for the tutors, none of whom had worked with me before. This included:

• playing the tape while the students followed the text
• students reading aloud round the group, with pronunciation correction at the end of each paragraph or by request – I encouraged people to ham it up, following the taped models, as many had flat non-clumped intonation which sometimes made them hard to understand
• discussing vocabulary and predicting events at the end of each section, chapter or natural break in the story
• discussing the issues at the end of the session
• using the exercises included with the texts.

Feedback from both tutors and students made it clear that this format was successful, so it was followed for the remaining sessions. As groups completed their texts, these were rotated, with the next being chosen by consensus.

Students were regularly given the choice of changing groups, but all opted to remain with their initial group. The only alteration was that two groups were amalgamated at the end of the fifth week, as the male tutor went overseas and four students left the class.
Phase two

Halfway through the project students were given a questionnaire relating to both mainstream class reading and the Friday afternoon project reading. The results were encouraging (see Appendix 2). There was a general rise in confidence in tackling new texts e.g. from *Air quality today* (Brown and Butterworth 1998) which I used as preparation for assessment in writing reports and reading information texts. This was attributed mainly to increasing familiarity with reading strategies. Comments about the effect of Friday activities on general reading made it clear that they had boosted confidence:

*I thought that I wasn’t able to read in English because my English is limited and I thought it’s very difficult, but I was on a wrong way.*

*It gives me much more confidence.*

Nevertheless, at this stage comments from the questionnaires and from informal class discussion showed that the main progress students perceived was in their speaking. Being in small groups with a native-speaker to correct them meant improved pronunciation and this, in turn, gave them more confidence when talking to Australians outside class. Several also said that they were now more aware of the importance of intonation, having heard it in context and that they were consciously trying to improve their own patterns.

Vocabulary was the other major gain. This was largely because the context of a story line made it easier for them to remember words.

As a check on their in-class reading habits, I gave them a weekend reading task on dreams. I asked them to read it in whatever way they wanted, but to write down the method they used. The results are outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Reading</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 out of 15 read through the text without using a dictionary</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the 12 marked new vocab as they read</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 checked vocabulary and questions, then re-read the text</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 re-read the text then checked the dictionary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 students read in detail from the start, one using the dictionary as he went, the other using it after answering the questions, just as a check</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 in each of the groups read the questions and then reread the text</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 out of 15 answered the questions last</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These answers made it clear that skimming and reading for gist were now much more widely practised and that dictionaries were used only after a couple of readings. One student said that he read it only once with the dictionary. Even though he thought this was not right, it was what worked for him, which, as we agreed, was what really mattered. Interestingly, he is probably the most proficient reader in the class.

Student feedback

The project continued, by popular demand, to the second last week of term. In the final session, the students divided themselves into mixed groups and swapped information about the texts they had not read, and their impressions about the texts. They also talked over general questions about the project (see Appendix 3). Their comments are summarised below.
No one text was overwhelmingly popular or unpopular. In fact, the general feeling was that the text itself was relatively unimportant, but the experience of small group reading of undemanding fiction was invaluable. The fact that the grammar involved was not dense and difficult made vocabulary more accessible and memorable. Reading aloud helped link letters and sound, which aided retention.

Success factors

These included:

- group size
- native-speaker tutors
- continuity of groupings
- interesting stories with real situations
- reading aloud
- discussion following reading.

Personal gains

These included:

- confidence in both reading and speaking – one student said that for the first time, her Australian mother-in-law understood her
- intention to read more, especially more fiction
- discovery that some council libraries stock similar test/cassette packages
- less dictionary reliance
- getting to know each other better.

As the project continued, students became more involved with the stories and less worried about their pronunciation, which actually improved faster as they relaxed.

Tutor Feedback

I also asked the two remaining tutors to comment on any changes they had noticed and to make recommendations for future reading projects. They identified:

- the same language gains as those observed by the students
- greatly increased group cohesion – sharing ideas, encouraging each other with pronunciation problems and noting improvement
- use of L1 in discussion decreased as bonding took place.

Final comments

The project was extremely worthwhile for the students. They were able to develop their self-confidence sufficiently to be able to use the reading strategies I have always taught at this level. The project also provided a less-structured activity which was both enjoyable and socially cohesive. The ESL readers were ideal for the purpose as they dealt with social groups and issues with which students could identify. They are written at a level with which CSWE III students are comfortable. Without exception, the students recommended continuing this strand of the course for future classes.

From a teacher’s perspective the exercise was also positive. It reinforced my gut feelings about the need for fun activities as a means of internalising more formal language work. It also provided distance which enabled me to reassess the kinds of
structured reading activities I have developed in recent years. As well as consciously focusing on various reading strategies, especially skimming, which are vital for future professional and academic work, I intend to provide more opportunities for students to choose their own approaches to reading texts, as long as they are aware that a choice is being made. I also want to continue with light reading, volunteers permitting. I can see that there is value in integrating such reading into the assessment program, as others have done. However for those involved in a further-study course, the relaxation element seems even more important. For me, the greatest evidence of success is the fact that almost all of the participants were very clear that they would now read far more in English for enjoyment.

Bibliography
Baylis, J 2000. Average dead body. Sydney: NSW A M ES
Waller, M 1998. Taxi driver. Sydney: NSW A M ES
Appendix 1

Reading Project
You can discuss these questions with your classmates in English as much as you like.

1. Think about the sort of things you used to read regularly in your own language. Write them in the sections below.

   a. Reading for practical personal purposes:

   | papers (3) | bills (1) | instructions (1) |
   | magazines (3) | handy hints (2) | encyclopaedia (1) |
   | cookbooks (2) | exercise books (2) | astrology (1) |

   b. Reading for pleasure/relaxation:

   | novels (13) | history (3) | geography (1) |
   | magazines (14) | comics (2) | travel (1) |
   | papers (4) | biography (1) | books to improve life (1) |

   c. Reading for work/study:

   | technical/professional (21) | religion (1) |
   | set texts (4) | politics (1) |
   | history (2) | nothing (1) |

2. Now think about what you read now in English.

   a. Reading for practical personal purposes:

   | papers (8) | timetables (3) | grammar books (2) |
   | TV guide (4) | letters (3) | instructions (1) |
   | brochures (4) | ads (3) | dictionary (1) |

   • everything I could (1)
b Reading for pleasure/relaxation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>short stories (5)</th>
<th>children's books (4)</th>
<th>jokes (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>magazines (11)</td>
<td>novels (2)</td>
<td>cookbook (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>papers (5)</td>
<td>comics (2)</td>
<td>letters (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- any book (1)

c Reading for work/study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>grammar (11)</th>
<th>homework (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>textbooks (6)</td>
<td>computer info (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simple technical books (2)</td>
<td>Internet (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Think about what you would like to read in English but don’t or can’t.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>anything I want to (5)</th>
<th>newspapers (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>novels (3)</td>
<td>world literature (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>science (2)</td>
<td>love stories (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional reading (3)</td>
<td>Australian literature (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 What are the reason you can’t or don’t read in English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vocabulary (11)</th>
<th>idioms (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can’t find what I want (2)</td>
<td>no time (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Think about the ways reading helps your general language learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vocabulary (15)</th>
<th>syntax (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>learn language in context (1)</td>
<td>think in English (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if you are interested you remember more (1)</td>
<td>grammar (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different ways of saying things (1)</td>
<td>don’t like reading (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

Reading project questionnaire

You are now halfway through the project.

A In this time you have continued with the normal classroom-type reading activities, mainly of factual texts. Look at the list below and think about the activities we have done.

- Brochures – Southbank fact sheets, Burdekin Agricultural College, Backyard burning
- Information texts – Newstead House, Skin cancer, Melbourne Cup, Storms
- News articles – Crow, computer shopping, graffiti
- Reports – Melbourne, Sydney/Brisbane, Sydney/Hobart, Olympics survey, Australian families

With these texts, we have practised predicting, skimming, scanning and reading for detail.

1 Which skill do you find most difficult?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>skill</th>
<th>response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>skimming</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scanning</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading for detail</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predicting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>everything</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Why do you find the skill difficult?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>difficulty</th>
<th>response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vocabulary</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idioms</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t know</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Have the class activities helped you develop the skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>helped</th>
<th>comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no comment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 How or why have the class activities helped you develop the skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>help</th>
<th>response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>know how to read properly</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>using strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practice</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different text types</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can’t explain</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B Now think about the Friday afternoon reading groups. In these you have:

- worked in small groups
- read fiction
- listened to a tape while you read silently
- read aloud

1 Have these activities helped your general reading skills?

- Yes (16)
2 How or why have these activities helped your general reading skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Someone to correct me (4)</th>
<th>Pronunciation (17)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story is interesting, you think about it (1)</td>
<td>Native speaker (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only time I read from beginning to end (1)</td>
<td>Small group (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hear my mistakes and can correct (2)</td>
<td>Confidence (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Is there anything else you could do in the Friday sessions which you think would help your reading?

|Vocabulary in advance (1)| No (16)|

4 Has there been any change in your out-of-class reading patterns/activities? Please explain your answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Read more (3)</th>
<th>A bit better (2)</th>
<th>More confident (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in speaking: I pay more attention to stress and intonation (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can't explain (1)</td>
<td>No (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Any other comments?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small groups better (6)</th>
<th>More time please (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps with grammar and vocabulary (2)</td>
<td>Will try to read more now (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect arrangement (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3

General discussion feedback

The responses below are a mixture of précis and direct quotes.

1. Swap information about the stories you haven’t read.

2. Of the stories you have read, which did you like best? Why?
   - There were no firm favourites, all very popular with nearly all readers.
   - Stories themselves were not so important anyway.

3. What did you enjoy most about the project?
   - It was interesting/fun/nice to read large amounts without analysing each sentence
   - Stories were easy, so you could relax and feel more confident
   - In small groups, you got to know each other and the tutor could correct
   - It was nice to do on a Friday afternoon when you don’t want to work hard
   - We always wanted to finish the story and read the next one
   - Different topics
   - Continuity from week to week, rather than short disparate texts.

4. What do you think you learned from it?
   - Vocabulary and idioms/pronunciation – it helps you to remember the words because you can see how they are used and you know how to pronounce them and spell them
   - Discussion is useful
   - Always think about context.

5. How has it helped you most?
   - Less scared of reading aloud
   - Encouraged us to read anything
   - Confidence
   - Remembering vocabulary
   - Less use of dictionary when we read
   - Much less use of dictionary until really stuck
   - We think about appropriate reading strategies
   - Working in small groups, everything is easier.

6. What will you read next?
   - Short simple stories
   - I’ll try to read anything
   - I’ll get the stories with cassettes from the library
   - Children’s books (either with kids or for myself)
   - Magazines
   - Local newspapers
   - Probably nothing (1).
3 Integrating competencies with reading narratives
Kay Hodges

Background
The AMEP course I was teaching during the project was a ten-week course of fifteen hours per week conducted over three days at the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE. It was the lowest of the CSWE II AMEP classes at the centre.
The course started with sixteen students ranging in age from 20 to 65 years and the group grew to twenty-one students. One-third of the group were new arrivals to the AMEP program, one-third had moved from CSWE I level to CSWE II level and one-third had already completed up to 150 hours at CSWE II level.
Thirteen of the students were from South-East Asian backgrounds, four were from Korea, two were from India and two were from Europe. They came from a range of occupational backgrounds and one had been a student prior to entering the class. The education background of the group was as follows:

| Under 12 years | 10 students |
| 12 years       | 6 students  |
| Over 12 years  | 10 students |

The class had one teacher for thirteen and a half hours a week and they spent one and a half hours a week with volunteer tutors in the Independent Learning Centre. The teacher had not taught any of the students prior to this course.

The project
First reading survey
In the second week of the course the class completed a reading survey about what they read in their home countries and what they read in Australia. The survey was designed to give some indication of the students’ previous, current and possible future reading patterns. Reading was discussed in class before the survey was compiled in an effort to ask relevant and comprehensive questions with language that could be understood at the low CSWE II level. The results of the survey are outlined in the tables opposite.

The survey revealed that newspapers and books for work were the most common type of reading matter in student’s home countries. This was followed by magazines. In Australia newspapers and magazines were sometimes read in L1 and slightly more often in English. Few students were reading books for work in English as most were not working. Except for those students who worked in Chinese restaurants, where L1 was used, the majority were not ready for English for employment. Novels and true stories were not read often in home countries and were also not popular in English.

The question Do you read books for study now in English? had a higher response, as students included reading books to help them learn English.

The students were also asked what they would like to read in English. This revealed that the most important texts for them were newspapers, magazines, information books...
### Table 2.1 Reading in home countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novels</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True stories</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information books eg cooking</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books/magazines for work</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books/magazines for study</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy books</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2.2 Reading in Australia in L1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novels</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True stories</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information books eg cooking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books/magazines for work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books/magazines for study</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy books</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2.3 Reading in Australia in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texts</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novels</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True stories</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information books eg cooking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books/magazines for work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books/magazines for study</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy books</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and books for work and study. A few were interested in true stories. One or two students revealed an interest in reading novels and books on religion and art.

The results of the survey were discussed with the class who agreed that they would try reading a short story in class. The shark (Waller 1999) was chosen because it was a story written for beginner levels.

The class was given a series of exercises based on the book to see if they had the necessary reading skills to cope with the reading level required. These included:

- matching pictures to text
- reading text to identify people in a picture
- listening to a tape to identify a person from a picture
- reading comprehension
- labelling a picture.

The class could cope with matching pictures to text and labelling but had some difficulty with comprehension questions where the context had not been built up with listening.

The students listened to the following description on the tape three times while looking at the picture below.

There are six of us at the table, four men and two women. Only one man is smiling. He is a fat man with a moustache and a red face. Tonight is his lucky night. His pocket is full.

They had to identify the lucky man in the picture from this description: Almost all the students identified the incorrect man as the lucky man. They focused on a man who was smiling but did not understand the word moustache. The fact that there were six people at the table plus the dealer was confusing.
Planning the project
The shark was read at around two pages per session over two sessions per week. The reader was linked to a number of CSWE II competencies which were introduced and practised at relevant points in the story. These competencies were reinforced and tested using other material. The overall weekly plan is outlined in the following table.

Table 2.4 The reading plan for each week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Associated activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading Survey 1 Pre-reading exercises</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>2 to 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar pronouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>4, 5 &amp; 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>7 &amp; 9</td>
<td>CSWE II Comp 14 Can write a short recount</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>10 &amp; 11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar contractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>11 &amp; 12</td>
<td>Survey 2</td>
<td>Competency 10 Can read a short information text Underwater World brochure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>15 &amp; 16</td>
<td>Restaurant ads Competency 8: Can participate in a short casual conversation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>16, 17 &amp; 18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Competency 9 Can read a procedural text – recipe Grammar Pronoun cloze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>20 &amp; 22</td>
<td></td>
<td>Complete table Who is doing these things?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>24, 26 &amp; 27</td>
<td>class discussion</td>
<td>T he Shark exercises</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students each had a copy of the reader and shared tapes for home use. They could also access the tape in the language laboratory and the Independent Learning Centre. They were asked not to read ahead in the story but some did. However this did not present a problem when each new section was introduced or during prediction phases.

The sessions which focused on the reader usually followed this sequence:

- recalling the previous section
- predicting, where appropriate
- silent reading with dictionary translation
- listening to the tape.

Two weaker students who were struggling with the number of unfamiliar words insisted on knowing every word rather than guessing from the context. They were given enlarged photocopies of sections on which they could write translations.

Students were given the opportunity for short sessions of one-on-one reading aloud.
to a tutor during their Independent Learning Centre sessions. All students participated in this activity at least once and some had a session each week. The tutor was asked to help students with reading, where necessary, to correct pronunciation and to make students aware of punctuation, where appropriate.

**Writing a short recount**

The reader provided an ideal opportunity to further practise the competency - Can write a short recount - which had already been introduced to the class. The students could identify the changes of tense in the story and several successfully used a combination of present and past tenses in their own recounts.

The expressions from the story - I like, I love, I dream - allowed some students to express their personal feelings eg I dream that I will go around the world when my English is better; I love my son and I dream that he will get a good job and be happy.

**Second reading survey**

When we had finished half the book the students were asked for feedback through a second survey. They were asked to be honest about their responses so that further reading sessions could be made more beneficial. Responses to this survey are outlined in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.5 Student feedback on reading program</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Are you enjoying The shark?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Are you listening to the tape?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Did reading to the tutor help you?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Do you want to continue reading to a tutor?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 In class each time we read would you like ...</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 The shark is</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Reading The shark will help me read other short stories</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This survey revealed that most students seemed satisfied with our rate of reading and the level of difficulty.

Reading aloud with a tutor had a mixed response. Some students had not tried this activity before. Others were unsure of its purpose or benefit but were happy to do it every second week. Those students who felt the story was too easy and who wanted to read more stories of this type were encouraged to borrow other books and tapes from...
the TAFE library for home reading. The student who wanted to read history facts was directed to appropriate texts, tapes and exercises.

**Associated activities**
During the project students completed a range of activities related to the story. These included:

1. **A pronoun cloze exercise**
   For variety, the students looked at a picture from the story and listened to a page before they read the text. They listened twice and then had to complete a pronoun cloze and self correct from the text.

2. **Extension questions**
   The extension question *How would you feel and what would you do if you were Chan?* allowed students to use both their own vocabulary as well as the taught vocabulary to express a personal feeling. There were some interesting responses which showed they were thinking beyond the text, for example:

   *I work too hard and I never gamble.*
   *Ask friends help me and ring police.*
   *If I was instead of Chan I feel very sorry and I decide that I will never do the same mistake again. To tell my parents the true story. And try to work hard to pay the money back.*
   *I feel palpitate and nothing thinking but I will try research method. I don't cry never.*
   *First, I sell my jewellery and the rest money is borrowing the bank.*

3. **Comprehension exercises**
The students completed a range of exercises such as the one below which was designed to check comprehension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read pages 20 and 22. Read the words in the column on the left and decide who is doing these things. Match these with the characters in the column on the right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smoking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asking questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wanting to cry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hiding something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>afraid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unable to speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking at account books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking at the floor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Follow-up
When we finished reading the story, the exercises in the back of the book provided a
global revision of the story. For some exercises the students had to refer to the book to
check specific details, and for other exercises they knew the story well enough to
complete them from memory.

Final comments
There was no written follow-up by students as I felt they had said all they wanted to
about the story. We discussed the ending of the story and speculated on whether Lin
would marry Chan. I think the students enjoyed participating in the class reading
project and will be more confident and competent in their future reading as the
following comments show:

I enjoy a lot but this story very afraid and worried.
I enjoy a lot. The sentence is short and simple. The story is interesting so I’m not
headache.
I enjoy a lot. I’m very happy. The shark have interesting and easy to read.
I’d like to read more books like The shark story. It was easy but helped me a lot.
Continually, I hope you give us like that.
I enjoy a lot because I understand it easily and it is improving my English day by day.
I would like to read more this type of stories.
I enjoy a lot because I learn new words and I can speak in English.
I enjoy a lot because every time I read it over and I get to understand the words more
clearly.
Everything is perfect and I enjoy it.
I am happy reading but I can listen a little.

Bibliography
Waller, M 1999. The shark. Sydney: NSW A M ES